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Young Dick Plunket:

Or,

The Trials and Tribulations of
Ebenezer Crow.

BY SAM SMILEY.



Ebenezer Crow pressed the button of the patent long distance telephone hung up in the professor's room. That is he thought it was a telephone. Dick had told him so and he believed it. He wanted to speak to Sam Johnson Jones, a colored gentleman in San Francisco.

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Young Dick Plunket;

OR,

THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF EBENEZER CROW.

By SAM SMILEY,

Author of "Out for Fun," "Sam Smart, Jr.," "The Shortys on the Road," "Benny Bounce," "Johnny Brown & Co. at School," "The Deacon's Boy," "Little Tommy Bounce on His Travels," "Little Tommy Bounce," "The Shortys' Minstrels," "The Shortys' Christmas Party," "Smart & Co.,"
"Jack Ready's School Scrapes," "The Shortys' Christmas Rackets,"
"A Rolling Stone," etc., etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

YOUNG Dick Plunket was a young fellow of seventeen or about that, as full of fun as he could hold, and the torment of Ebenezer Crow and everybody else.

Dick, his mother, his sister, and his uncle the professor had all lately arrived home from Europe at the time our story starts off.

Mrs. Plunket concluded to spend the summer at her country house, and thither the entire party repaired after getting out of the clutches of the polite custom-house officers.

Ebenezer Crow was a big, two-hundred pound nig who had formerly lived with Mrs. Plunket, had been married to her cook, and was now ready to resume his place as butler, footman, general major domo and handy man of the establishment.

With the resumption of his duties after a year of rest, began the trials and tribulations of Ebenezer Crow.

That's where the fun begins, where the plot gets thick, as it were, so let's get to business at once.

"Hallo, there, Sneezzer, are you down there?" howled young Dick Plunket into the speaking-tube leading from up-stairs to the kitchen.

Mrs. Eben, or Fiddy, as she was generally called, her full name being Assafidity Brown Crow, went to the speaking-tube when this summons came, and said:

"Wha' yo' wan' up dere?"

"Send Eben to the tube," called down Dick.

"Reckon I'se jus' as good as dat niggah. Ef yo' wan' ter sen' any message, gib it to me."

"Will you take it?"

"Yes."

"All right, put your ear to the tube then, for it's particular."

Mrs. Eben did as requested and took the message.

Dick had intended to work a snap on Eben, but as Fiddy turned up instead he was just as well satisfied.

Mrs. Assafidity Crow got the message, you bet. It was a handful of hot shot which Dick suddenly fired into the mouth of the tube and sent rattling down.

The way that colored lady dusted away from that tube was fine to witness.

That's what she got for her curiosity.

She thought she was going to find out all about her husband's business, and she only got the dose intended for him.

"Ah, there! go away from there!" called down Dick.

"Drat dat boy!" sputtered Fiddy, "he am jus' de same debiltry makin' feller dat he was when he went away to Yurup. I spees me an' Eben hab trubble wif dat young seamp afo' we gets froo."

I will give it to you straight, now, that Mrs. Eben had the correct idea of the situation.

Well, after working a small racket like that, one that required no advance thinking, you understand, Dick went off to plan out some more elab-

orate gag, and I merely give you this as a pointer to let you know the kind of patent burglar-proof, self-cocking, easily-adjusted safety-pin he was.

Dick's sister Rose, being a sort of high flyer, older than Dick and fond of beaus, had to stand a good many of Dick's rackets, though not as many as her fellows, for Dick was all the time running them.

There was one young anglo-maniac dude, who had met the family in Europe, had afterwards come home and had renewed the acquaintance of Miss Rose.

This young man's name had been Albert, but he had changed it to Bertie since his return from England, because it was more aristocratic, don't you know.

Well, this young sprig came out to spend a day or so at Mrs. Plunket's country place, and, as he had friends in the neighborhood, there was every chance of his one day's visit lengthening into four or five. This was strawberries and cream to Dick who would thus have lots of opportunities to work snaps on Bertie.

Well, Bertie arrived with his luggage, as he called it, baggage being too American to suit him, and settled himself down upon the Plunkets.

Dick wondered what the fellow would do with so many trunks if he were going to stay only one day, but he ceased wondering after a short time.

That dude had a change of clothes for nearly every hour of daylight.

The only wonder was how he could get along with so few trunks, considering the display of toilets.

At breakfast he had a dark suit, in the forenoon a lighter one, just before lunch a white flannel, just after lunch a tennis rig, in the middle of the afternoon a velvet get up, later on a tweed ditto, at dinner a full dress lay out, and after that a heavy walking suit.

The next day the programme was changed, and one or two new suits were brought out, the time of wearing the others differing from the hours of the day previous.

"Holy smoke! He's a regular change artist," remarked Dick. "I wonder if he has his clothes made in sections so as to change more rapidly?"

Well, on the first morning after Bertie's appearance, Dick called Ebenezer and said:

"Sneezzer, those benches on the lawn want to be painted. Get at it right away."

"What color yo' wan' dem painted, Dicky?" asked the coon.

"Green, of course, just as they are now."

"A' right, Dicky, I do dat right away."

Ebenezer got to work right away as he had said he would, and gave the rustic benches around the lawn a prime coat of green.

Well, pretty soon out came Bertie in a white flannel suit, escorting Miss Rose.

Eben was at work on one of the benches, but his back was toward the young people, and they could not see what he was doing.

"Don't you think it's vewy fatiguing to walk on the gwawss, Miss Wose?" asked Bertie. "I'm so

used to the pavements of Lunnon—quite different from those of New Yawk, don't you know?"

"Yes, they are horrid things."

"Yas, vewy, and the climate is so vewy enawating too, don't you know—not at all like the cleah, bwacing atmospheah of deah old England, I fahn-cy."

"Oh, no, not at all."

"Let's sit down undah these twees and listen to the bawds, impawted from England, I fahn-cy. You have no such bawds heah, don't you know?"

Now Bertie was not at all near-sighted, but he wore a monocle, and I defy any one to see with one of those abominations stuck in his eye.

Consequently he did not observe anything peculiar about that bench.

Rose did, but not until it was too late.

Then she gave a scream.

"Oh, Mr. Smith, do get up," she yelled, "there's something on the bench."

Bertie got up and turned around to see what it was.

Then Rose gave another double power scream and fainted.

She had to do it on the bench, of course.

The noise attracted the attention of Ebenezer Crow, and he turned around.

Then he saw a big patch of green on the seat of Bertie's white trousers and another on the back of his white coat.

He also saw Miss Rose, in a white gown, sprawling over that newly painted bench.

"Wow! dat am too funny fo' any'ting," he roared.

Then his emotions, getting the better of him, he sat down on the bench he was painting and just bawled.

He did not think that he had done the same thing that Bertie and Miss Rose had done, but he had for a fact.

He scooped in a square foot of green paint with that broad stern of his, and as he had on a pair of white overalls, it showed up most conspicuously.

"Faw heaven's sake, why didn't you tell me the bwench was painted, ba Jove?" stammered poor Bertie.

Then Rose recovered, saw that her fingers had turned green, let out another screech, and fled to the house.

"Aw, I wouldn't mind it, you know, if the stwipes went all the way awound," remarked Bertie, "but now I look like a prisonah in the Bwidewell, don't you know. Only fahn-cy."

He could not go around in those clothes after that, and, indeed, it was nearly time to change anyhow, as he had worn them fully an hour.

"Yah, yah, jus' looker dat dood," roared Eben, squirming around on the bench and shaking with laughter.

If he kept on, there would not be any paint left on that bench.

"Huh! de green am boun' ter strike froo some time er noder, sho's yo' bawn," he howled, "but I didn't spect it 'ud come out so strong as dat no-how."

Then he howled some more, and he had no delicate, weak lungs either, he hadn't.

"Yah-yah, dat am de funniest t'ing I eber see. Eve'ybody know dat dood fo' a greenhawner now, ho-ho!"

"I weally believe that howid niggah is lawfing at me, only fahney," muttered Bertie as he crossed the lawn. "They nevah have niggahs in deah old England, but the Amewicans don't know any bettah."

"Wow! jus'looker dat dood," howled Ebenezer, rolling off the bench. "Funniest t'ing I eber see. Wondah if Dicky do dat, he am so fly wif his tricks."

He had evidently forgotten that he had been painting the benches himself.

He remembered it, however, when he suddenly caught sight of his own fat hands.

Then he tumbled.

"Goodness me, I done cotehed mi' own se'f," he muttered. "Clar' to glory ef I did'n jus' fo'got all 'bout dat paint. Wondah ef I got some ob dat on my own close?"

He had to nearly screw his head off to get a look at his rear, but he got there all the same.

Then he piped a different note.

It made a big difference whose trousers had paint on them.

"Well, ef datain' smart! If I coteh dat Dicky boy, I just lambaster him in de jaw, I will. Ruin dem fine trowsahloons of mine just so he kin hab some fun. Wait till I coteh him, dat's all."

"When he was ter Yurup, den I had some peace an' quietness, but de minit he get back, den my trials and triberlations begins, so dey do."

"Nebor yo' min', honey, I gets hunk on yo' fo' dat, I does. When I coteh yo' I smash yo' jaw so bad dat it take a week to mend um."

Then Ebenezer started for the house to change his soiled clothes for he was quite a swell, in his own way, and liked to look neat.

Near the house he met the celebrated Professor Dinglebus.

The latter was a sort of harmless lunatic, who was always inventing something or other, expecting to make an enormous fortune some day.

The professor was a tall, lank, sallow man with a big nose made expressly to carry a huge pair of spectacles, a drooping mustache, watery eyes and tangled hair, cut shoe-brush fashion behind.

He generally slouched around in a swallow tail coat and slippers, dirty wristbands and rumpled collar, for he was too much engrossed with his scientific studies to pay any attention to such minor details as the condition of his linen.

"Good-morning, Ebenezer," said the professor, who had come out for an airing. "You seem disturbed about something."

"Reckon yo'd be 'sturbed yo'se'f, 'fessor, ef yo'd hed de 'sperience I had dis mawnin'," said Eben. "Just looker my close an' tell me if dat ain't enuff to 'sturb anybody."

"Ah, yes, green paint," muttered the professor, glaring through his goggles at Eben. "Come into my laboratory, Ebenezer, and I will give you something to counteract the effect."

Eben did not completely grasp the professor's idea, being somewhat thick headed, but he caught on sufficiently to understand that the obnoxious pigment was to be removed.

He followed the professor to a room on the top floor, cluttered up with models of machinery, shelves of bottles, big and little, stuffed alligators, a skeleton or two and a lot of other rubbish.

The professor dabbled in every one of the arts and sciences to a lesser or greater extent, and was always on the verge of getting up something with millions in it, but up to the present time the millions had not made themselves apparent.

Ebenezer got somewhat scared at sight of the skeleton, but the professor at that moment said in a pleasant tone:

"Stand on that bench, Ebenezer, and I will see what can be done."

"Am de bench berry strong?" asked that solid coon, looking apprehensively at the bench.

"Yes, it will require a strong remedy, of course," said the professor absent-mindedly, "but we are used to such. Now then, let us see what can be done."

Eben got upon the bench, which was stout enough to hold him, and then the professor got a big sponge, saturated it with something from a fat bottle, and began to soak the seat of Eben's trousers.

The stuff had a pungent odor and Ebenezer began to sneeze.

"Will dat take de color out of dem trousers?" he asked.

Seeing that the trousers were white, the question, viewed in one light, was rather superfluous.

"Oh, yes, it will remove every trace of the paint. A great thing, Ebenezer, an invention of my own. I expect to realize largely on it. The great Dinglebus eradicator for removing paint,

grease, dirt, spots and blemishes of all kinds in one second, will not injure the finest fabric, can be used as a wash or lotion and costs only one dollar a bottle."

"Gorry!" muttered Eben, stepping off the bench.

"There are 60,000,000 people in the United States alone," said the professor. "Estimating a family to consist of ten people, and putting it at the low average one bottle every two years to a family, we have the sum total of three millions to be made from the elixir every two years. Deducting the cost of manufacture, advertising, samples and expenses of living, which, put at a high figure, ought not to exceed a hundred thousand dollars, we have in ten years the enormous profit of sixteen millions, to say nothing of the other—"

"Ebenezer!" called Mrs. Plunket from downstairs.

"A'right, missus," said Eben, making his escape before the professor could quite talk him deaf, dumb and blind.

Now, on the way down he met young Dick Plunket.

The latter had a keen scent, and he smelled something.

He also smelled a large-sized job.

"Where have you been, Sneezer?" asked the young rascal.

"Up in de 'fessor's room, gettin' suffin' to take de paint off dem trouserloons, what you put on, yo' had, good-fo'-nuffin' boy."

"You're mistaken, Sneezer. I didn't put any paint on you."

"Yes, yer did, Dicky, an' some day, when I am'n't so busy, I see gwine ter lambaster yer jaw fer yer, un'stand?"

"Hold on, Sneezer," said Dick, "the professor did not finish the job. Turn around."

Eben turned around.

The professor's great eradicator was nothing more or less than naptha, and Dick recognized the smell of it at once.

Now this stuff is highly inflammable, although giving out very little heat.

When Eben turned around, Dick struck a match and applied it to the seat of Eben's breeches.

A blue flame a foot long instantly burst forth.

Ebenezer heard the snap, turned his head and saw the flame.

He let out a yell heard all over the house and started down stairs on the run.

He suddenly burst into the kitchen where Fiddy, Mrs. Plunket and Joanna Gilhooly, the chambermaid, were congregated.

His wife and the chambermaid yelled bloody murder as Eben appeared with his stern all on fire.

"Lan' ob goodness! de debbil got dat niggah dis time fo' shuah!" screamed Assafidity Crow.

"Howly saints and marthyrs, look at the nagur!" yelled Joanna, getting ready to run.

As for Ebenezer he made a bee line for the back door, a flame a yard long streaming out behind him.

He looked comical enough, and was in no danger, but he did not know that.

Just outside the door there was a big water butt, nearly full, and Eben made for this in haste.

He plumped into it headfirst without any ceremony, the water rushing over the top in a perfect flood.

The fire was out, sure enough, but the trouble now was to get Ebenezer out.

There wasn't room for him to turn around in the butt, and as he had gone in head first, he was in great danger of being drowned, or thought he was.

He kicked and struggled, got hold of the edge of the butt, hauled himself up a little, and then slipped back to the bottom.

He did this several times, managing to get his head out of the water, which was now at half tide, and so had a chance to breathe.

Finally, he made a more desperate attempt than any, and upset the cask.

He sat down on the stones hard enough to crack them, while the gush of water from the butt fairly deluged him.

"Well," he sputtered, when he caught his breath, "fust I gits burned up and den I gits drowned. Pears ter me dere am nuffin' but triberlations fer dis coon."

"However did you get on fire, Ebenezer?" asked Mrs. Plunket.

"Marse Dicky he say he took de paint off my trouserloons, an' den he done took a match to 'em and I got all on fire."

"Well, you are a fool to do anything that Dick tells you," was the consoling reply.

"Specs I is," muttered Eben, as he walked sadly away. "I sayed I'd lambaster dat boy on de jaw when I coteh um, an' so I will."

That wasn't the last he saw of young Dick Plunket for the day, however.

Dick was not the sort of boy to let up on any

one when he had a good thing, and he had a dandy one in Ebenezer.

He could work snaps not only on Eben himself, but on others, through the coon's stupidity and thick headedness.

It was along in the afternoon, when the sun was piping hot and everybody sought the shadiest spots, that Dick played Ebenezer for a flat once more.

This time he dragged in somebody else, as you will see.

It was as hot as young love or mustard, but there were cool spots here and there about the place.

Assafidity and Joanna had collared on to one of these and were shelling peas for dinner.

The spot was just around one corner of the barn where there was a tree and a couple of chairs and everything fine.

The unshelled peas were in a basket on the ground between the two women, and every now and then they would dive into it for a lot, chucking the empty pods into a basket on the other side and putting the shelled peas in pans which rested upon their laps.

Well, just remember that Assafidity and Joanna are around the corner of the barn shelling peas.

They will stay there and we want to make use of them presently.

Ebenezer was sweeping up the dust on the barn floor with a big splint broom when along came Dick.

The fat coon was stooping over, with his back to the door, when that roguish boy came by.

"Oh, my!" remarked Dick, as he picked up a flat pebble.

Then he let drive.

"M!" remarked Ebenezer, when the thing struck him on the quarter just below decks.

He straightened up so suddenly that his big straw hat flew off.

Then he turned round and saw Dick.

"Yo' just wait till I coteh yer, confoun' yer imperent skin!" muttered Eben, shaking his big fist.

"Get out, you stuff!" laughed Dick, making a masonic sign by a combination of nose, thumb and fingers.

"G'long, yo' sassy boy!" muttered Eben. "Yo'm no use 'tall around de place, an' if folks axes me what we'se gwine ter do wif yer I'll tell 'em we'se gwine ter chuck yer inter de hoss pond."

"Go on, coon!" chuckled Dick, taking Eben on the top of the head with a chip.

"Yer don' just want ter fool aroun' me no mo', I done tol' yer," growled Ebenezer. "De fust t'ing yer know yer gets a pain in de jaw, I tol' yer."

"You give me a pain in the stomach, Sneezer," laughed Dick, shying another chip at the big moke.

"Yer just don' wanter make any mo' muss aroun' yer fer me to clean up, I tol' yer, boy," growled Eben. "If I get after yer, I make yer feel sick."

"You do now, Sneezer," tittered Dick. "I feel so tired when I see you that I don't know where I'm going to sleep at night."

"Huh! I put yer to sleep, yer bettah b'leve, if I get hold ob yer," said Eben with a grunt as he went in.

Well, Dick continued to worry that poor coon, having an object in view in so doing.

He chuckled chips at him, he made faces, he twiddled his fingers at the end of his nose, and he called him skinny.

A fat man never likes to be called that, and Ebenezer was like all the rest.

"I'll skin you'se, yer good-fo'-nuffin' brat," growled Eben, making a dash at Dick.

That was just what Dick wanted.

If he could only coax Eben to run clear out after him.

He skipped out and dodged around the corner.

"Ah, go on wid yez, ye young Dicky burrud," said Joanna.

"Don' yo' come foolin' roun' dis place, young fellah," grunted Fiddy. "We'se busy, we is, an' don' wanter be boddered wif youse."

"Ah, there, Stove Polish," chuckled Dick, throwing a kiss at Fiddy. "How goes it, Irish? That red head of yours will scorch those peas if you bring it too near them."

"Go on wid yer foolishness, and don't be botherin' a dacint girrul," muttered the chambermaid. "Faix, I'm sorry yez iver come back from Yurup, so I am."

Then Dick skipped around the corner again and stuck his head in the door.

"Nigger eat railroad iron," he warbled, making a snoot, as they call it, at Eben.

The coon made a dart at him, and Dick dusted.

He did this two or three times, till Ebenezer got good and mad.

Please remember that Ireland and Africa, in the shade, knew nothing about Eben in the barn.

Contrariwise, neither did Ebenezer know that the two pea shellers were so close.

Well, he was pretty well worked up by this time.

"Just see me lambaster dat boy de nex' time he come roun' yer," he muttered, grabbing his broom. He snaked along toward the corner, ready to give it to Dick the very minute he heard his footsteps.

Presently he heard them.

Now was his time.

He meant business.

The broom was raised.

Eben grabbed it firmly.

Somebody was going to catch something.

Yes, somebody was, sure enough.

Who was it?

CHAPTER II.

EBENEZER thought he heard footsteps coming.

He was laying for Dick with a big broom, just behind the door.

The steps came nearer, and then Eben rushed out and gave his broom a swipe right around his head.

Alas for his miscalculations!

It was not Dick at all that he swiped.

It was Fiddy and Joanna.

What a wreck there was when that broom swept around.

The two women went rolling over, their chairs were upset, the tin pans went flying and it rained peas for several seconds.

As for Dick, Ebenezer never touched him.

The footsteps that the coon thought he heard were made by Dick thumping on the barn with his hands.

For a moment Ebenezer thought he had done wonders.

He laughed till you could hear him in the next town, and shook till the buttons began to fall off his waistcoat.

That was until Joanna got up from the ground. Her red hair bristled with indignation, and you could almost see the sparks fly from it.

"Go on, you big stuff, and don't be cutting up any av yer keddies around here, ye black monstrosity," she sputtered. "Begob, ye're just fit to feed the pigs, ye big gawk, and that's all ye are."

Then Assafidity got in her little remarks.

"Ain' yo' shamed ob yo'self, 'saultin' innocent folks like o' dat, yo' no 'count niggah? Yo' got no mo' sense dan a yaller dog, yo' hasn't."

Then Eben took a tumble.

"Clar' fo' it, I didn' know yo' was roun' dar," he muttered.

"Dat Dicky he get ter foolin' wif me an' make me so mad dat I jus' knock ober eberything."

The women wouldn't take any such explanation as that.

Joanna grabbed a broom and Fiddy seized a mop.

Then they both went for him, hot and strong.

He was glad to dust out of that in short order.

Both women got in two or three cracks apiece before he could escape, however.

Away he went, the broom and the mop flying after him, while Dick sat on the fence and wept for joy.

"Don' undahstan' der ting at ail," remarked Ebenezer, when he had reached a place of safety.

"Didn' know dem gals was anywhar roun'. If I ertch dat Dicky boy I wahn him jacket fo' him, yo' bet."

Young Dick Plunket was not being caught, however.

He sat on the fence and warbled softly:

"Did you get left, oh, did you get left,

Ain't it too bad for a man of your heft?

You wasn't fly enough, oh, what an awful stuff!

And that is why you got left."

"Yo' got left if I get aftar yer once," growled Eben.

"You're too big to catch me, Sneezer," laughed Dick.

"Neber yo' mind, sah, yo' find I'se spry 'nuff to catch yer one ob dese days."

Eben went back to the barn and Dick left him alone for a few minutes.

It was only just long enough to work up an old-fashioned gag on Ebenezer, however.

You have heard of the combination of a pail of water and a partly open door, of course?

To be sure you have.

Well, that was the sort of racket Dick fixed up for Eben.

He put the pail of water on the inside, just over the door, which he left open an inch or so.

Then he went off to find that coon and get him into the trap.

Meanwhile Assafidity required the services of her husband in coaxing a bucket of water from the well.

"Ebenezer!" she called. "Oh, Eben, whar am yer?"

"Faix, yez know that he wint to the barn," said Joanna. "Didn't yez see him yerself?"

"Dat's so, I done seed him. S'peaks he's went to sleep, de lazy fellah."

Then Fiddy went to the barn to hunt up Eben, at the same time calling for him in a high soprano voice.

The big coon heard the same, and started off to see what was wanted.

Fiddy and Eben both had that little barn door in view, one on the outside and the other on the inside.

"Hi dere, you Ebenezer! Whar am you?"

"Heah I is. What yer want?"

Assafidity reached the door first.

Bang!

Splash!

Oh, my!

The lady banged the door open with her fist.

She got the dose intended for Ebenezer.

The suddenness with which she sat down on the barn floor was something surprising.

She just gasped and sputtered for a few seconds while the water ran off her in rivers.

Eben took in the show, guessed at its cause and howled.

"Wull, fo' goodness sakes! If I ain't de luckiest niggah dat eber was!" he chuckled.

The idea of his escaping so cleverly was too good to let go by.

He opened his mouth and let out a laugh that shook the building.

That was only a sample of what he could do.

Having started he proceeded to keep it up.

How he did laugh, to be sure!

It was better than the circus to hear him.

Dick had put up a snap on him and Fiddy had caught it.

Why wouldn't he laugh at that?

Assafidity Crow had only one explanation to offer for Eben's mirth.

He had put up the job on her and was now enjoying her discomfiture.

As you all know, it was nothing of the sort.

You couldn't make Fiddy think anything different, however.

When she got through sputtering, Eben was still laughing.

Dick ha' heard the rumpus and now came around to see what it was all about.

"Yo' misable big niggah, you, ain' yo' 'shamed to do dat?" shouted Fiddy. "Jus' yo' look at dat clean frock ob mine, all wet an' dutty. Yo' flink I'se got nuffin' ter do 'cept wash frocks fo' yo' to frow watah ober?"

Dick saw how the cat had jumped that time and chuckled.

Ebenezer was too full of laugh to answer a plain question.

He fairly doubled up with hilarity.

Fiddy wasn't going to have snaps played on her and then be laughed at besides.

She grabbed up the pail, which had rolled towards Eben, and slammed it over his flat head.

It was easy enough to do it when he stooped over to let out a laugh.

"Take dat, yo' nassy big niggah, you," cried Fiddy, giving Eben a kick on the shin.

The big coon howled, and made a break for the door.

The pail stuck just where Fiddy had put it.

"Aha, the coon turns pale-face," laughed Dick. Eben was in such a hurry to get away that he didn't stop to take the pail off his head until—

Well, until it was taken off for him very suddenly.

In his haste he ran slap dash into a tree, pail and all.

The pail stood it, but Eben sat down with considerable force.

Away rolled the bucket, and the coon, as he rubbed his head and winked, remarked angrily:

"Don' see what fo' dat yer tree had ter hit me, when I neber done nuffin' to him. 'Pears to me I ain' comin' out of dis snap so well as I fort."

Indeed he was not.

Fiddy still considered him the cause of her getting a ducking.

As she came out of the barn on her way to the house to change her wet garments she stopped to give the poor coon a stunning old box on both ears.

"Dere, jus' yer took dat, yo' funny nigger," she remarked, "an if yo' play any mo' ob yo' tricks on me I sen' yo' way fo' good, I does."

Then she retired, and Eben remarked:

"De trials an' tribberiations ob dis ge'man hab begun fo' a fac'. Mought ha' knowed dey would when dat young Dick get home agin."

"Phwat are yez settin' there for, ye nagur, whin we're waitin' for the booket av wather?" demanded Joanna.

"Does yo' want a bucket ob watah?"

"Yis, an' in a hurry."

Eben caught Dick laughing at him just then

"You'se put up dat racket on me, an' Assafidity

got it, young feller," he sputtered, "an' den I got it m'self; but I reckon yo'll get sumptu' yo'self ef I lay my han's on yer once."

"You won't be able to see me if your big hands get on me. They're as big as boats."

"Neber yo' min' how big dey am. Reckon yo' flink dey am heaby as lead when yo' feels dem on you'se."

"All right, Sneezer. "I'll tell you how they feel when you catch me," laughed Dick.

Then he went off fishing or swimming, or somewhere else, and Eben had a rest.

Dick could enjoy himself if he wasn't rigging that coon, and he proceeded to do it.

Eben was not the only fellow upon whom Dick put up jobs.

There was another who caught almost as many as Sneezer did.

This was Johnny Gilfeather, Joanna's young man.

He came to see his mash nearly every night, and Dick was ready for him nearly always.

He had not been around as long as Eben, and that was the only reason why he had not been roasted so often.

Gilly, as Dick called him, was a dandy Mick, with a brogue too thick for an ax to cut, and a head a trifle thicker than that even, but he was gone on Joanna.

Dick had recognized him as a probable victim to his snap upon their first meeting.

He had been to see Joanna several times, and was due again that very evening.

When Dick returned in the cool of the evening, after a little stroll, he saw Gilly going around to the back door.

"Joanna's young man, hey?" he remarked.

"Well, I think I can make it pleasant for him if I try very hard."

Then he skipped into the house and met Gilly at the back door, getting ahead of Joanna, who was up-stairs.

"Good-evening," said Dick. "She expects you. Won't you walk up-stairs. She's in the parlor."

"Begob, Joanna, do be puttin' an great airs, the day," remarked Gilly to himself.

"This way," said Dick, leading the way around the house. "Joanna has been looking for you a long time. Do you know what she says?"

"Troth, she do be sayin' a power av things some times, and thin she do kape thot quite I most go to shlaope."

"She says you daren't kiss her, that's what."

Mr. Gilfeather's face turned as red as the cravat he wore.

"Oho, she do be sayin' thot, do she?" he gurgled.

"Yes."

"Oho!" and Gilly gurgled again, in what was meant to be a laugh.

They had by this time reached the front door. Dick opened it and led the way to the parlor.

"Sit down," he said. "She'll be here presently."

Then he waltzed out, leaving Mr. Gilfeather in semi-obscurety.

He met Rose coming down-stairs. Rose was his sister, you know.

She had a good many beaus and Dick was fend of roasting them.

"Who is it, Dick?" asked the young lady.

"One of the fellows."

"Which one, Dick?"

"Oh, I don't know, some foreign duck, I suppose."

"Is he a real duke, Dick? Oh, yes, I know, that awfully sweet man we met in Paris."

"In Parry, you should say," laughed Dick.

Then he went his way, while Rose made for the parlor.

"This isn't just the way I meant to have it work," mused Dick, "but it ought to go first rate. Now to hunt up Joanna."

Gilly was sitting on the extreme edge of a plush sofa, for fear of bursting it if he sat squarely on it, when the door opened.

He thought it was Joanna, of course.

"Daren't kiss her, is it?" he thought.

Then he showed that he wasn't the least bit afraid.

Up he jumped and grabbed Rose in his arms. Smack!

It sounded like slapping a brick wall with a shingle.

"Good avenin'. How is thot?"

Smack!

The salutation was repeated.

"Does thot luck as if I wor afeard?"

Smack!

"Faix, there's ruck in odd numbers, suppose we thry ut agin."

Smack!

Three strikes and out!

Rose was somewhat surprized, to say the least.

"Why, Mr. Howard, you astonish me!" she said.

"I never gave you any reason to suppose—"

"Hould on, hould on, yez haven't me name reight," said Gilly. "I'm not Howard at all."

"Then I didn't meet you in Paris?"

"In Porris, is it? Yez did not. I wor niver there. Maybe it wor in Dublin?"

"Oh, yes. You are the Irish lord who was so attentive to us. I did not expect, however, that you would take such liberties upon so short an acquaintance."

Gilly was beginning to get it through his thick head that something was wrong.

This was not Joanna at all.

He must get out of it somehow and speedily.

"Oh, that's all right," he said. "We Oirish min av quality allways thrates young leddies just as we wud our sisthers, yez knows."

If she had not thought he was a nobleman, Rose would have been mad.

That was a different thing altogether.

"You're very queer, you Irish gentlemen," she giggled. "American girls don't like men to be quite so free as that."

"I always h'ard they did," said Gilly, trying to locate the door.

"Well, not on first acquaintance, don't you know," said Rose with another giggle.

After all, Gilly had not done such a terrible thing.

Rose was inclined to pardon him now that she knew him to be a lord or a duke or some big gun or another.

And all the time Gilly was wondering how he was going to get out.

"Ahem!" said Rose, sitting down.

"I think so meself," said Gilly.

"How do you like America?"

"Begob, I don't remember any other place," thought the poor fellow.

He had been imported when a very small youth, and had no recollection of his native sod.

"Do you like it better than your own estates?"

"Oh, yis, to be sure, certainly; phwat in blazes is she talkin' about annyhow?"

The last part of the remark was directed to himself.

"I suppose you will write a book about us," giggled Rose.

"Faix, I wish I might," muttered poor Gilly.

Just then the door opened, and in came Miss Joanna with a light.

She nearly dropped it in her excitement.

The first person she saw was her fellow.

"Begob, it's foine airs ye do put an', Johnny Gilfeather," she cried; "coming into the pairlor to see me forbye goin' to the kitchen. Phwat's atin' yez?"

Then she saw Rose sitting with her mash.

Her jealousy was at once aroused.

"Oho, so it's ye, is it, that's the cause av it?" she screamed.

"Haudn't ye fellers enough av yer own widout goin' off wid wan av mine?"

"Tundher and turf!" cried Gilly; "it's the young leddy I've been kissing."

"Oh, yer have, eh!" shrieked Joanna. "Faix yer needn't come to see me anny more, Johnny Gilfeather, and I'll thank yez to returrin the presints—"

Rose did not stop to hear any more.

She dusted as speedily as she knew how.

"That horrid Dick!" she gasped. "I'll give it to him for this."

CHAPTER III.

It took considerable explanation on the part of Johnny Gilfeather to satisfy Joanna Gilhooly that he had not been flirting with Miss Rose.

"And phwat for did yez go into the pairlor?" she asked.

"Bekase the young gintleman said I'd foind ye there and bekase he said—"

"Phwat?" asked Joanna, as Gilly paused.

"Bekase he said that ye said that I didn't dar to—"

"Didn't dar' phwat, ye gawk?" asked Joanna.

"To do this."

Smack!

Whack!

Mr. Gilfeather took a smack and got one in return.

Joanna got one on the mouth, he got his on the ear.

"How dar' ye do that, ye bould vilyan?" demanded Joanna.

"Sure, I thot ye loiked it. The young leddy didn't make anny fuss over it."

Whack!

"She didn't, eh? How dar' yer brag about it, ye decaiver! Faix, I ought to sind ye away intolyre. How many times did ye say ye—"

"Did this?"

Smack!

This time Gilly dodged and got in two smacks to one whack.

"Go an wid yez!" expostulated Joanna.

She let Gilly give her some more of the same medicine, however, when they had adjourned to the kitchen.

Rose was pretty mad at Dick and threatened to tell his mother.

"You needn't get mad, sis," said the young rascal. "You wouldn't have cared at all if it hadn't been Joanna's beau that kissed you."

No more she wouldn't, if the truth must be told! She wasn't going to tell it, however.

"You're a mean thing, Dick Plunket," she retorted, "and I'm going to get mother to send you off to school for all summer—so there!"

"All right, I'll let you know when I go," laughed Dick.

The fear of being sent away did not keep young Dick Plunket from playing off snaps.

He was just as lively as ever, the young rascal.

It was only the next day that he worked another snap on Rose, or, more properly speaking, on one of her dude admirers.

This fellow's name was Tom Henry Jones, but he had transmogrified it to T. Henri Johns, as he thought that sounded much better.

Mr. T. Henri Johns had considerably more money than brains, and sported a dog-cart, in which he rode around town and took Rose out for an occasional airing.

It ought to have been a puppy cart for such a dude as T. Henri Johns, but everybody called it a dog cart.

The slim came around in it to take Rose out the very next day after the snap on Gilly.

Dick was hanging around when T. Henri drove up, and the young fellow immediately thought of a racket.

"Hallo, Tom Henry," cried that untterrified Dick.

The dude tried to look severe, but only managed to look foolish instead.

"Yaw sistah is at home, I pwesume, Wichard?" he asked.

"Yes, unless she's gone out with Bill Todd. He has two horses, Bill has."

"H'm, I thought yaw sistah had maw spiwit than to associate with a fellah like that," said the slim, as he got down from his seat.

"Oho, sis don't care about that," laughed that terrible boy. "She only goes with you because you've got the rocks."

Pleasant thing to tell a fellow, that was.

However, T. Henri was a good deal stuck on Rose, and he had a good deal of cheek besides.

"Yaw a howwid fellah," he said, screwing in his single eye-glass, "and I don't believe yaw sistah said anything of the sawt, don't ye know."

Then he stalked up the walk and into the house, trying to appear dignified, and making a hopeless failure of it.

When the door had closed upon the dude, Dick ran around to the side of the house and called out:

"Hi, Curry, where are you?"

In a few moments a comical little coon made his appearance.

He was as broad as he was tall, and had a head as big as a water bucket.

Everything he wore was too small for him, and he seemed to be bubbling over at all points.

His fat arms projected away beyond the sleeves of his jacket, and his fat legs made a very high tide in his short breeches, while his wide collar didn't begin to go around his fat neck, and his butter cracker hat was at least three sizes too small.

He made you laugh to look at him, for his complexion made all other coons look faded out, and a perpetual smile hovered around his fat chops that was decidedly infectious.

"Jew wan' me I anyflug, Mass Dick?" he asked with a chuckle that threatened to dislocate his buttons, mild as it was.

I hardly dare tell what the consequences would have been if he had laughed outright.

"Yes, Curry, I've got a job for you," said Dick.

"Who am de job on dis time, Mass Dick?" asked Curry.

The fat little nig's whole name was Currycomb, though how he came by it no one pretended to know.

Dick did not, at all events, and he called the lump of charcoal Curry for convenience.

Curry was the son of a sister of Assafidity's, and she, having more young responsibilities on her hands than she knew what to do with, her husband having skipped out after the arrival of the ninth, had packed the fattest of the lot off to Assafidity and Ebenezer Crow.

"Yo' habn't got no chillen to look aftah an' I'se got mo'n I know what to do wif," she had remarked.

At first Eben kicked, but his wife overruled objections.

"Neber min', Eb'nezah," she said. "De boy kin be ob some use to youse, an' if we don' neber hab no chillen ob our own, some day we kin 'dopt him."

"Huh! I reckon it am bettah to 'dopt some chillun ob my own 'stead ob takin' strangers' brats fo' to brung up."

"What yo' mean by dat, yo' obstreperous nigger?" demanded Fiddy.

"Nuffin much," muttered Eben, "but if dat boy stays yer, he's gotter 'have hese'f, I tol' youse."

That's the way Curry happened to be there, for when Mrs. Plunket returned Ebenezer took the young coon with him when he went back on the place.

He was a regular little imp of mischief, and Dick often put him up to play larks on Ebenezer.

The worst of it was, however, that Curry got licked when Eben found out the tricks, and sometimes for things in which he had no hand.

However, more of that as we proceed.

"What yo' wan' me fo' to do, Mass Dick?" asked the African midget, when Dick called him.

"I'm going driving, and I want you for a tiger."

"Law' sakes, Mass Dick, what am dat?" asked Curry.

"Never you mind, but just you skip in there and get the tall hat you find on the rack."

Curry did as he was told, and presently he returned with the dude's high dicer on his fat head.

It was a better fit than his own chapeau, and Dick laughed.

"Here you are, jump aboard," and Dick hustled the young coon up on the seat, and then told him to sit up straight and fold his arms.

About the time that Miss Rose was putting on her hat young Dick Plunket drove away in the dude's dog-cart with the fat nig in a high hat sitting solemnly alongside.

It was a dandy turnout altogether, and attracted considerable attention.

Dick was in for a lark, and he didn't care how long poor Thomas Henry had to wait for the wagon.

When Rose came down all in her best to accompany the dude, the latter went out to look for his hat.

He could not find it, nor could he see anything of his horse and cart when he looked for them.

"It's vewy stwange what became of my hat, don't ye know," he observed, saying nothing of his other loss.

"What did you do with it, Mr. Johns?" asked Rose.

"I put it on the wack wight heah, don't ye know."

"Maybe that horrid Dick has taken it."

"Yas, I saw him just outside when I came in."

"Take this one," said Rose, handing the dude one of her brother's hats.

"Yas, that's all wight, but I'm afwaid the howid fellah has taken the hawse and cawt too, don't ye know."

"Oh, no, he wouldn't dare!" exclaimed Rose.

She did not know Dick.

The dude thought he did.

"Pon honaw, I don't believe he's afwaid of anything," he remarked.

"It's too mean," said Rose. "Now we'll have to walk."

"Oh, deah! and I haven't me walking-suit on, don't ye know," wailed the dude. "It's vewy bad fawm to go out walking in a widing costume, don't yer know?"

"Oh, I don't mind," said Rose, who did not want to let Tom Henry get away.

"Oh, well, if you don't mind," muttered the dude.

Off they started, and as they reached the gate Eben came along driving a team of mules to a cart.

He did not admire dudes, and he always felt like running them out.

"Was yo' goin' ridin', Miss Rose?" he asked.

"Just jump right in, you and Dicky."

He knew it wasn't Dick, but he pretended to think it was.

"Oh, hevins, he thinks I'm that dweadful boy!" gasped the slim.

"No, thank you!" said Rose, in staccato accents, each word a little higher than the last.

She was one of the sort who underscore every word when writing letters, and she talked in much the same way.

Then Eben pretended to see his mistake.

"Yah-yah, dat am too good," he remarked, with a horse laugh accompaniment. "I done took dat dandy fo' Dicky. Yah! won' he be mad when I tol' um 'bout dat, oh, my!"

Then the big coon laughed so loud that it scared the mules, and they went clattering down the road at a great rate.

Pretty soon along came Dick, in fine style, with his nigger on the box and handling the ribbons like a regular Jarvey.

"Hello, dude!" he sang out. "Thanks for the turn-out. I'll leave it at the gate. You can have my footman, if you like. He'll give you lots of style."

Away drove Dick, and T. Henri Johns felt mad enough to choke him.

He hoofed it back to the house and got his horse and cart; but Rose did not care to go out for a drive now; and he had to go it alone.

When Eben saw Curry sitting on the box, he laughed, but all the same, he warmed that young coon's trousers for him that night, and Curry did not think the last of the joke as funny as the first.

He complained to Dick the next day, and that young joker determined to work a snap on Eben to pay for the whacking he had given Curry.

Professor Dinglebus, Mrs. Plunket's brother, was a queer case, as I have already remarked, and his study was as queer as he was.

He had models of all sorts of queer inventions

was a mystery, unless the professor included it in his collection of bric-a-brac.

At any rate, it was there, and Dick used a part of it for the carrying out of his little trick.

The young fellow was considerable of a mechanical genius himself, and in a little while he had knocked together quite a fine little infernal machine of his own.

When he had fixed it to his entire satisfaction, he went and called Eben.

"Hi, Sneezer!" he yelled.

"Does yer want me fer anyfing, Dicky?" asked the big coon.

"Yes, come here."

When Eben came up, Dick said mysteriously:

"Seen the professor's new telephone, Sneezer?"

"What am dat, Dicky?" asked the moke.

"Sam Johnson Jones."

"Would you like to talk to Sam Johnson Jones?"

"Wull, I guess! He owes me two dollars sense a year ago."

"Well, you can fetch him with this telephone, Sneezer."

"Don't b'lieve it," sniffed the coon.

"You would if you got your two dollars from Sam Johnson Jones, wouldn't you?"

Eben thought that he certainly would.

That two dollar business settled it.

"All right, you come with me and we'll try and get it," said young Dick.

The sucker was as good as on his hook now.

He led the way to the studio and pointed out the telephone box on the wall.



What a wreck there was when that broom swept around. The two women went rolling over, their chairs were upset, the tin pans went flying and it rained peas for several seconds. As for Dick, Ebenezer never touched him.

which he had evolved from his eccentric brain stuck around on shelves all over the room, to say nothing of bottles, cabinets, and everything else more or less useless.

From time to time he had some great scheme on hand, from which he expected to gain a fortune, and he would talk about it for hours together.

By some hook or crook, however, the thing failed to develop, and was in time dropped to make room for some bigger and more paying invention.

The professor afforded Dick the material for plenty of snaps, although they were not all played upon the learned man himself.

The one I am going to tell you about now was the particular one which Dick got up for the benefit of Ebenezer Crow, in return for the licking he had given Curry.

Dick was in the professor's work-shop one day when the tenant thereof was off in the woods hunting up bugs, and he proceeded to get up something to amuse Ebenezer.

A square box, a big spiral spring, and part of a cigar-store Indian formed the nucleus of his snap. How in time the cigar-store Indian got in there

"Don't you know what a telephone is?"

"Oh, yes, one ob dem boxes what yer hollers 'hello' inter, an' talks to a feller down in de nex' town."

"That's it, but the professor's beats all you ever saw."

"Am dat so, Dicky?"

"Oh, yes."

"De 'fessor am a great man, ain't he?"

"Bet your boots."

"What kin him tellyfome do dat de oders kean't?"

"Why you can talk to a man in California."

"G'way, Dicky, yer kean't do dat."

"Oh, yes."

"Don't b'lieve any sech yarns as dat yer, Dicky."

"Do you know anybody in California, Sneezer?" asked Dick.

"Suttingly I does," replied Ebenezer, convincingly.

"Whereabouts?"

"Safrancisco, ob so'se."

"You know somebody in San Francisco?"

"Co'se I does."

"Who is he?"

It looked just like any other telephone box at first sight.

Perhaps it was a trifle big, and even Eben remarked this.

"That's all right," said Dick. "It's got to be big for a long distance message, you know."

Oh, he had an answer for all of Eben's objections.

"Dat's so, neber fort ob dat," remarked Ebenezer.

"Now you see this button and this little door?" he asked of his victim.

"Yes, I see dem."

"Well, step up here, ring the bell, and say hallo quite loud."

"M-m!"

"Then you wait a moment and say that you want to see Sam Johnson Jones."

"Huh! do I see um, Dicky?" asked the coon.

"Talk to him, I mean. We haven't got this thing down so fine as that yet, but we are coming to it soon."

"You don't say?"

"Oh, yes."

"Huh, I just like to see dat ting wo'k, before I b'lieve all dat, Dicky."

"Well, step up and try it then, if you don't believe it."

"Talk to a man in Saffrancisco, Dicky?"

"Certainly."

Ebenezer scratched his head by way of musing on that point.

"You spees I get my two dollars f'om dat nigger, Dicky?" he finally asked.

"Quite likely."

Ebenezer stepped up to the telephone box and rang the bell quite lively.

"Hello!" he yelled.

"That's good," said Dick. "That's first class."

"What I do now Dicky?" asked Ebenezer.

"Call up the fellow that you want to talk to."

"Hello! dat you, Sam Johnson Jones?" bawled Eben.

Then the big spiral spring inside the box let itself loose and out came the big wooden hand taken from the body of a cigar store Indian.

It was a regular Jack-in-the-box, up came McGinty affair all around.

One crack was enough for that black crow.

He sat down on the floor greatly astonished, and the boards creaked.

Dick closed the box in a hurry, and everything was as before.

Ebenezer looked all around and finally asked:

"Wow! Who hit me dat time, Dicky?"

"Guess it must have been your friend Sam Johnson Jones of San Francisco."

"Golly, he am got a powerful fist! He needn't get mad 'bout dat two dollars, dough. 'Tain't nuff makin' so much fuss 'bout, I don't tink."

the day and went at once to his study, being full of business.

His eyes lighted upon the telephone.

"Ah, how delightful, a telephone! How thoughtful of my dear sister to have it put in. It is such a convenience."

He wanted to call up somebody at once, the same as a boy wants to tell everybody the time when he has his first watch.

"Let me see, there's Bob Tanner, I want to ask him something about that new patent of mine for taking a kink out of a dog's tail. Guess I'll call him up."

The professor lost no time in trying to communicate with his friend.

He grabbed the bell, pressed the button, and yelled "Hallo!" all at once.



"Hello! dat you, Sam Johnson Jones?" bawled Eben. There was no answer. "What am next, Dicky?" asked the interested coon. "Press the button." "Den will I get a answer?" "Yes." Ebenezer pressed the button.

There was no answer.

"What am next, Dicky?" asked the interested coon.

"Press the button."

"Den will I get a answer?"

"Yes."

Ebenezer pressed the button.

CHAPTER IV.

EBENEZER CROW pressed the button of the patent long distance telephone hung up in the professor's room.

That is, he thought it was a telephone.

Dick had told him so and he believed it.

He wanted to speak to Sam Johnson Jones, a colored gentleman in San Francisco.

As I have already said, he pressed the button.

Oh, dear!

The door flew open, an enormous wooden fist flew out and Ebenezer caught it smack on the nose.

He went flying backwards in a jiffy, and fell on the floor all in a heap.

That was Dick's little invention.

Pressing the button released a hook that held the box lid in place.

"How do you like the telephone, Sneezzer?" asked Dick.

"Golly, Dicky, dat am de mos' pow'ful ting I eber see, but it am very luck fo' Sam Johnson Jones dat he am in Saffrontisco. If he wasn't I broke him all inter bits fo' givin' me dat crack."

"I say, Sneezzer, why don't you call him up on the telephone, and give another one just like it?"

"Tell dat nigger I want um, an' den soak he in de jaw jus' like o' dat?"

"Yes."

"H'm, I reckon he won' stay dar. He mought 'spect I war gwine to do suffin' of de kin', Dicky."

"You might try it, Sneezzer," said Dick, persuasively.

Ebenezer did not seem very anxious, however, and Dick was afraid of coaxing him too hard, for fear he would tumble to the thing.

There was no more fun to be got out of it that day, and anyhow Fiddy was heard calling the big coon just then, and he had to dust.

Dick left his telephone box in position, hoping to use it again some day.

It was used sooner than he expected.

Professor Dinglebus came home in the course of

Scarcely had he opened his mouth before he got a crack on it.

He nearly yanked the whole business off the wall he sat down so suddenly.

"H'm! there must be a storm somewhere; wires very fully charged; quite a shock; very dangerous; must make a note about it."

He didn't bother to send any more messages over the wires after that.

In fact, he did not even look at the thing.

There it hung, its inside workings all exposed, and if Ebenezer had happened in just then he would have known just how Sam Johnson Jones had been able to hit him such a crack on the snoot.

Eben did not come along, but Dick did, and he knew at once what had happened.

He just snickered right out, and remarked to himself as he put the thing in shape again, baiting the trap as it were:

"Well, I swan! Wouldn't I like to have seen his nibs when he tried to ring up somebody on that? Just a little, that's all."

It wasn't very many days after that, perhaps the next, for young Dick Plunket was a lively boy, that the little joker played another racket on Ebenezer.

In fact, the trials and tribulations of Ebenezer Crow were keeping right up to time these days.

Dick got Curry to help him, and the two prepared to make lots of fun for Ebenezer.

Out in the barn yard there was a cistern, which held the superfluous rain-water which ran off the roof.

This cistern was covered over with boards, which were removed when any extra water was wanted.

This generally happened in a dry season when the water-butts gave out.

Dick and Curry got to work and shifted those boards, or two or three of them, so that one end would fly up if a heavy weight were placed on the other.

"G'way f'm yer, you Dick?" growled Ebenezer, scowling across the yard at Dick.

"Go on, Curry, let him have it!" whispered Dick.

Curry did let him have it.

He went within ten feet of Mr. Crow and then soaked him in the neck with a hard green apple.

"My wo'd!" howled that poor coon, jumping as though he had been shot.

Then he gave chase to the little coon.

Curry ran right across the boards covering the cistern.

He was all right, for he stepped on the boards that had not been moved.

Ebenezer was mad, and he just made up his mind to give Curry a spanking to be remembered.

"Yah-yah, dat nigger am so big he can't see whar he am gwine."

"You ought to look out for that cistern, Sneezer," said Dick wisely.

Then he skipped out, having got all the fun it was worth out of that racker.

Curry skipped because it was the wisest thing for him to do.

Mr. Crow managed to get out of the cistern after Fiddy had fetched a ladder, for he didn't dare to trust to the planks alone.

"How you come fo' to go fo' to fall in dere anyhow, Ebenezer?" asked the wife.

"Reckon some of dem bo'ds done got rotten an' broke froo wif me."

"Wull, what fur yo' run ober der cistern, anyhow? Couldn't yer go round, yer shaller feller."



Ebenezer Crow pressed the button of the patent long distance telephone hung up in the professor's room. That is, he thought it was a telephone. Dick had told him so and he believed it. He wanted to speak to Sam Johnson Jones, a colored gentleman in San Francisco.

Then they laid for Ebenezer in order to make him bite.

"You go out there and get him to chase you, Curry," said Dick, after a bit, when he saw Ebenezer at work.

"Why, don' yo' go out dere yo'se'f?" asked the fat little coon.

"You know he won't chase me. Go on, you little stuff!"

However, Dick went out to the barn where Eben was and began to pelt him with green apples.

"G'way from yer, I tol' yer!" said Eben when an apple bounded off his head.

Dick waited till the coon stooped over to pick up something.

Then he let drive again at the coon's stern post.

"Lam' ob glory!" howled Eben, straightening up suddenly.

"Yah, yah, dat make um jump!" cried Curry, highly delighted.

"But you daren't peg one at him," said Dick.

"Reckon yo' don' dar' me, boy," said Curry pompously. "I'se 'fraid ob notin', I isn't."

"Well, then, throw this one at him."

He gave chase at once, and at a pretty good speed.

He would have caught the chunky darky but for one thing.

He stepped on a couple of the loose boards.

Up flew the further ends, and down went Ebenezer.

There was a terrible jumping and cracking and then a splash.

The big coon was soused into that cistern in a jiffy.

The water was not so very deep, neither was it over warm.

"Wush!" sputtered Ebenezer, as he came to the surface.

Then the two boys, the white and the black, just lay back and howled.

"Yah-yah-whoop! jest look at dat ole stuff ob a Uncle Eben in de watah!" chuckled Curry.

"Swim out, you're over your head," laughed Dick.

"What fur yer gwine to do dat?" demanded Ebenezer, hauling himself up by grabbing one of the planks.

"Wull, bizness done took me crost dere," replied Eben, saying nothing about Curry.

Assafidity always stood up for the boy no matter what he did.

For that reason Eben never complained very much.

He got square on the fat lump of ebony all the same.

It happened thusly on this occasion.

An hour or so afterwards when Mr. Crow had changed his clothes he heard the little coon shooing the hens out of the orchard.

Making no more noise than possible, he sneaked out toward the orchard and hid behind a wood pile till Curry came along.

Then he jumped out and grabbed the fat rascal by the nape of the neck.

The way he yanked that boy across his knee was a caution.

Whack!

Spat!

Slap!

Ebenezer's hands were nearly as big as hams to start with.

When they came down solid on anything it had to take it.

They just made that fat little coon's rear extension sting when they descended upon it.

"Ow, wow! Stop o' dat!"

"Yas, I will, when I get froo wif yer boy."

Whack!

"Wow! quit yer foolin'!"

It was no use for Curry to kick and squirm.

Ebenezer had him fast and he put in every lick just where he meant it to go.

He did not stop till the little coon had nearly squirmed out of his breeches and then he gave Curry a lift and remarked:

"Dere, you young imp, you just lemme catch yer playin' tricks on me agin will yer?"

"Youse ain' got no right to hit me like o' dat," blubbered Curry. "I hit yo' wif a rock de nex' time."

"Ain' got no right, hain't I? Well, I guess when I 'dopts a boy I 'se got a right to whack him jess when I please an' don' yer furgit it."

Curry moved away, smarting with the whacks. Ebenezer had given him and not caring to sit down for a long time.

"H'm, dat ain't fahlah," he muttered. "Mars Dick put up de job an' I gets whopped fo' it. Why de doose don' he get a few lickens? I gits de hull on 'em."

That was a conundrum which Dick might have answered, if he had been given the chance, but he wasn't.

He heard the sound of the spanking and Curry's yells, and remarked to himself:

"Guess that little coon is getting a wallop. Some folks never know when to keep away from darger."

Poor Curry did not find Dick to complain to, for that young gentleman went fishing, and did not show up till supper-time.

The next day he put up another job on Ebenezer.

Professor Dinglebus was going to the city.

He expected to stay a day or so, and so took a big valise.

Ebenezer was to take the aforesaid gripsack to the cars for the professor.

The latter set it on the piazza while he went into the house to get something he had forgotten.

Then Dick came along and got on to it.

"Hi, Curry!" he whispered, seeing the little coon loafing in the hall.

"What yo' want, Mass Dick?"

"Come here and help me pack the professor's grip."

"Sho! I don' know nuffin' 'bout packin', Mars Dick."

"Yes you do. Hurry up."

Then Dick opened the grip which was not locked and took everything out of it.

"Now then, in with you," he said to Curry.

It was a pretty tight fit, but the grip was big and Curry was not tall.

"There you are in for a full ride to the station," laughed Dick.

"Am dat big fool nigger gotter ca'y me?" asked Curry.

"Yes."

"H'm! dat be a big joke on um, yah—yah—whoo—"

Dick cut the laugh short by shutting the grip.

The professor came out soon afterwards, looked at the bag and muttered.

"I wonder if I have really put in everything I want? Perhaps I had better look it over."

Dick had already hustled the regular contents of the bag out of the way.

"Oh, yes, you've got everything," he said.

"You'll have to hurry, Uncle Dinglebus, or you'll get left."

"H'm, yes, I see, ah, well, perhaps so," and away went the professor for the train on foot, leaving the horse standing in the road.

Shortly afterward Dick jumped in and drove away, calling to Fiddy as he went past the house:

"Tell Ebenezer to bring that bag down to the station right away."

He had tumbled the professor's duds into another grip and this was in the wagon.

"Don't you want to ride?" he asked, when he overtook the professor.

"Do I want to ride? Why, yes, I suppose I do," said the absent-minded man, and Dick stopped for him to get in.

Ebenezer grabbed that grip with a growl and started for the station.

"Don't see why dey couldn't've took the blame ting 'long o' de wagon," he muttered, "'stead o' makin' a fellertote it."

"Wondah what he hab got in dere anyhow? It am as hebbly as bricks, it am, an' packed solid. Some folks ain't got no 'sideration fur oder folks, so dey habn't."

"Lan' ob glory! What a load fur a feller to tote, an' de sun so hot like it am to-day. Must tink I 'se a reg'lar truck hoss."

"I 'se gotter put the ole thing on m' shoulder ef I doan' wan' ter jess meit away in de middle ob de road an' leav on'y a puddle ob watah. Wow! but ain't she heaby?"

It wasn't very cool for Curry shut up in that valise, and if Dick had not looked after the ventilation of the same by poking a few holes in the top, the poor little coon would have been smothered.

It was a little easier for Ebenezer, carrying the bag on his shoulder, but Curry was no feather-weight and Eben had no fool of a load to lug.

He set the thing down once or twice, and every time he did so he gave it a kick.

"Cuss de ole t'ing, anyhow! Don't see what fur de 'fessor wan't to tock so much stuff wif him fur, anyhow. He ain't gwine ter stay a monf."

"Dere, you take dat! I 'se boun' ter get even on sumpin', anyhow."

Curry got one kick in the rear and another in the ribs and one in the ear before Eben got through.

He hadn't bargained for that sort of treatment.

It wouldn't do to kick now, however.

That would give the snap away, and Eben would be very likely to warm his exterior with that big paw of his.

In fact, the joke was as much on the little coon as upon the big one, although the former did not see it just then.

"Huh! wondah if de 'fessor t'inks I 'se a mool, ter be totin' sech big loads as dat fo' um when dere am de wagon?"

"It was jess like dat young loafer ob a Dicky boy to dribe off an' leab dis yer' heaby ting behin' im! Jass like ter frow it in de ribber?"

Poor Curry wondered what he would do in such an event.

Perhaps the thing would not come open when it struck the water.

In that case he would be in a pretty kettle of fish.

Puffing, blowing, sweating and growling, Ebenezer reached the station just before the arrival of the train.

Dick had already seen the professor's baggage checked and the check in the latter's hands.

"Dere yo' am, an' I jess wished yo'd flnk ob yo' baggage yo' se'f de next time!" growled Eben.

Then he banged the thing down on the platform without any mercy.

It gave a howl when it struck.

Curry had got a dandy punch in the ribs from his own knee when he landed.

Hence the howl.

"Lan' ob glory! What am dat?" cried Eben.

He soon found.

The valise busted open with that crack.

Out rolled a fat, perspiring and very mad little coon.

All hands around the station began to laugh at this.

"Oh, the kidnapper!"

"What a load of charcoal!"

"Whew! Get to windward!"

"Oh, Ebenezer!"

"Oh, Sneezer! Trying to get rid of that poor little angel!"

Curry was on his feet by this time.

He had just realized that the joke was on him as well as on Ebenezer.

The big coon nearly stared his eyes out when he saw what came out of that bag.

"Lan' ob goodness! Hab I done been totin' dat sassy little niggah boy all de way fom de ho'se down yer?"

"What very peculiar luggage!" remarked the professor.

He had lately been in England, and so said luggage instead of baggage.

Curry himself now began to make himself heard, likewise felt.

The toes of his boots were not felt by any means, and yet they were felt, and felt pretty severely at that.

"Kick me in de tumnick, will yer—confound youse!" he sputtered.

Then he kicked Ebenezer in the shins.

"Kick a hole in my insides, yo' ole fool, will youse?"

Ebenezer got another kick at that.

"Frow me down on de flo' jess like I war a bag o' taters, h'm!"

Ebenezer got another kick which made him yell.

He jumped back, fell over a trunk, rolled to the edge of the platform, and might have fallen on the track if two or three fellows had not grabbed him.

Here Curry got in a couple more kicks.

"Youse kicked me when I was down, an' I do de same to youse," he muttered.

Just then the train came in sight.

Ebenezer got up and Curry dusted.

"Was de 'fessor gwine ter take dat lilly imp to de city in de bige?" he remarked. "Wall, it am a pity he didn't do it an' chuck him in de ribber."

CHAPTER V.

THE fine shaking up which Curry got in that latest racket on Ebenezer Crow made that little coon extremely cautious how he fooled around the big one.

"Mass Dick jes' play dat on me," he muttered. "Bad 'nuff to get mos' smodered in dat bige wif-out bein' shoooken up an' kicked an' dumped out on de platfo'm like o' dat. I look out how I goes wif dat boy aftah dis time."

As he also got another dandy wallop from Ebenezer there was still further need for caution.

Dick had enough to keep him busy without calling on Curry immediately, anyhow.

Eben also got a rest, although he declared that he would whack Dick as soon as he caught him.

Not being annoyed by the young fellow made him forget all about this threat, however, and he was likely soon to fall into the traps set for him by Master Dick.

It was about time to do something for the benefit of Joanna Gilhooly, the Hibernian lady who ruled the up-stairs department at Mrs. Plunket's.

Joanna had forgiven if not forgotten the lark played upon her young man, Mr. Gilfeather, and a nice little snap was quite in order.

That's what Dick thought.

He was, moreover, always ready to furnish snaps to order, besides taking one from his stock, which was very fine and large.

It being Joanna's turn, Dick now took a snap out of his collection, and proceeded to polish it up for the lady's benefit.

It was a stock snap, and had been worked before, but it was good just the same.

Miss Gilhooly was doing the sweep and dust act up-stairs when Dick proposed to work off his little racket.

He had a wire spider, one of those very lively ones dangling from the end of a string, and which seems to be all alive, oh, and with this he intended to give Joanna a picnic.

He lengthened the string by adding a lot of fine, strong fishing line, and then with the aid of a couple of little screw eyes, hardly big enough to be seen, suspended the spider from the sitting-room ceiling while Joanna was up-stairs.

Then he brought the string down into a convenient closet, the door of which had a nice little peep hole in it, accidental of course.

Presently Joanna came into the sitting-room to dust.

She had her head tied up in a towel and carried a big broom, likewise a feather duster.

As Joanna entered, she saw the spider dangling half way from the ceiling to the floor.

"Oh, murder! look at that!" she howled, letting out a yell that could be heard in the kitchen.

"Oh, the dirty baste! and me just afther goin' all over thim ceilin's wid me brish. Look at the impidence av him. Faix, I'll fix ye, misfher spider."

Then she made a pass at the spider with her broom.

He jumped up out of her reach, and Joanna spun half around.

Assafidity was just coming in to see what that scream meant.

She got that broom right under her left ear.

"Oh, Lawd! what dat?" she yelled, sitting on the floor.

"Begob, I killed him that time," said Miss Gilhooly.

Fiddy was very mad, for one of her real gold, eighteen karat ear-drops had been ground right into her neck.

"What fur you do dat, you sassy t'ing?" she demanded, glaring fiercely at Joanna.

"Oh, begob! Is it ye I hit? Faix I thought it war—Wough!"

The spider suddenly dropped right in front of her turn-up nose.

She let out a yell, jumped back and fell over Fiddy, who was just getting up.

Ireland and Africa got very much mixed up.

They rolled over on the floor together, and Dick would have laughed to split himself if he had dared.

"Phwat are yez doing, ye clumsy winch?" sputtered the Irish lady, struggling to her feet.

"Phwat fur did yez thrip me up?"

Then she saw that spider dancing just in front of her.

Whish!

Joanna aimed a crack at him with her broom.

He jumped up, and the weapon passed under him.

Assafidity was just getting up or the broom might have passed over her head.

It did not, by a large majority.

It took her right in the jaw instead.

Over she went, smash against the hall door.

She nearly bursted out a panel she hit it so hard.

Then she was mad, for a fact.

Her dander rose right up, there was blood in her eye at once.

"Look yer, yo' sassy white Irish trash," she sputtered, "if yo' hits me like dat agin I'll frow youse out de winder."

"Sure, I didn't mane to hit ye at all," explained Joanna. "It wor the spidher I aimed at."

"Ain' no spidah heah 'tall," snorted Fiddy. Then she saw the creature dangling before her very eyes.

She let out a yell and struck at the horrid thing. Joanna got the crack right in the mouth.

"Oh, murder, don't do that," and she, too, made an attempt to hit the insect.

She hit nothing.

Fiddy jumped out of the way, and Joanna fell on the floor.

Then both got up and faced each other angrily. Both had blood in their eyes and meant business.

"How dar' ye pull me hair, ye ugly-looking winch?"

"What fo' yo' giv' me a pinch den, yo' no good Irish loafer?"

"Don't ye give me anny guff."

"I won' took no sass f'om yo' I tell yo."

Slap!

Spat!

They were at it hammer and tongs.

In the midst of it the spider came down right between them.

They both howled and jumped back.

In came Ebenezer, wondering what all the fuss was about.

Then he wished that he had waited a few moments.

Two angry women suddenly fell upon him and began to make it very warm for him.

"Wow! What am de mattah!" he howled, trying to break away.

Each woman thought that she was giving fits to the other.

Ebenezer got a terrible basting, as a result of this misunderstanding.

"Golly, you'se wimmens am crazy, I think," he yelled, finally succeeding in getting away.



There was Mr. Washington Pye and his sister Miss Creampuff, the Honorable Baxter Street and Mrs. Street, that giddy dandy, Mr. Snowflake White and a lot others, all of the cream of colored society. Eben had his hands full, and Fiddy was helping him. Dick was unnoticed and had slipped to the rear.

It was a regular moonlight picnic to Dick, but he had to hold his horses.

"Drat de ole thing, I fix him dis time," said Assafidity, grabbing up the broom which Joanna had dropped.

If the spider had ever got the blow she meant for him, his tale would have been told.

He did not, and Fiddy spun around and around, and then sat down on Joanna's head.

She was not a very heavy coon, but she made Joanna think that an elephant had stepped on her. The black and the white were again very much mixed.

"Get up, ye clumsy lump!" howled Joanna.

"Dat what youse get fur settin' on me," said Fiddy.

Then the spider came right down within reach. The cook grabbed at him, but got a handful of red hair belonging to Joanna instead.

"Oh, glory!" screamed the up-stairs girl.

Then she pinched Fiddy's arm till the coon fairly yelled.

"Wow! you jess stop o' dat," remonstrated the cook.

By way of persuasion she nearly yanked Joanna to her feet by the hair of her head.

Fiddy fell over the table, and Joanna sprawled over a chair.

Then they both sat on the floor and looked all broken up.

"Bad luck to that spider! there he is now!"

"De nasty t'ing am de cause ob all de trubble!"

"Faix, av yez kep' the kitchen clean there'd be no spidhers at all."

"Don' yo' talk to me! It am yo' wo'k to due' de rooms!"

"The spidher is black, just like ye, begob!"

"An' heam I'sh, jess like youse, so he am!"

"No, sor! There's niver a spidher in Ireland since Saint Patrick dhrove thim out, be gosh!"

"Anyhow he am no good, jess like youse, nassy P'ish brat!"

That was something that the up-stairs girl would not stand.

"Go an, ye black slob," she growled, jumping up.

Assafidity also got up and both females made a rush for each other.

Each thought the other meant to escape by the door.

Both made a dash for it and at that moment it opened.

Fiddy was the first to realize the mistake that had been made.

"What fo' yo' strike my husban' fo'?" she demanded.

"Faix, yer husband is no better than ye!" retorted Joanna, "and naither av yez is anny good."

There was a strong likelihood of the fight being renewed.

Meantime, however, Dick had come from his hiding-place.

He had yanked down the spider, and he now held it between the two girls' noses as they angrily faced each other.

"Oh, murder! there he is again!"

"De Lawd hab massy on us."

Then Assafidity and Joanna made a break and dusted.

"Not so bad after all for an old snap," remarked Dick, as he looked after the retreating domestics.

Then he let himself out and laughed till he was tired.

"Well, I'll be blowed! The thing was meant for Joanna, but the whole gang got soaked, and on an old collar button like that, too. Most anything will do after that."

Fifteen minutes later Joanna stole cautiously in the room and cast a wary glance all around.

There wasn't the least sign of that big spider, however.

"Maybe the baste run away be way of the back shtairs," remarked Miss Gilhooly. "Faix, I hope he'll go down to the kitchen and fricken the life out of the nagur."

The spider had gone down to the kitchen for a fact.

He went because Dick had taken him there.

The young fellow concluded that perhaps there was a good deal of fun yet to be gotten out of him.

When Dick reached the kitchen Fiddy was standing at a table in front of a window and with her back to him, engaged in the building of a loaf of bread.

She had a big pan of flour in front of her and was stirring it up with both hands and talking to Ebenezer at the same time.

Eben stood just outside looking in at the window.

As Dick came in, he held up his hand as a signal to keep quiet.

"Wha' fo' youse two gals go fo' me like o' dat?" asked Eben.

"Cause we didn't know it was you, dat's all."

"Well, what was de mattah befo' dat?"

"Dere a horrid, nassy spidah in de settin'-room, an' me an' dat I'ish gal we bofe done try to knock him down, an' we couldn' do it."

That was when Dick came in the room.

Eben saw the spider in Dick's hand and grinned.

"What fur yo' laff at dat?" asked Assafidity.

"Does yo' lack spidahs yo'se'f?"

"M-m, of c'ose not. I'se on'y laffin' at de way I get it in de mouf de time yo'se bofe came fo' me."

"Huh! dat was putty funny, wasn't it?" chuckled Fiddy.

Then Dick held that spider over her head.

Ebenezer wanted to laugh but he only grinned. He could always appreciate a joke when it was worked on some one else.

Lower and lower dangled that spider till it almost touched that female coon's nose.

She was just beginning to get that flour and water into good shape.

When she saw that hideous thing in front of her, she just howled and threw up her hands.

Away flew that mass of dough, taking Ebenezer smack in the face.

"Take your base," laughed Dick. "Ball four!"

He might have said a ball of flour, but he did not.

Assafidity sat on the floor and yelled like forty cats with fits.

Ebenezer sat down in a wheelbarrow full of earth that he had left outside of the window.

"Well, well, there's another one caught by the same old gag," laughed Dick. "Guess I'll save that spider and use him again."

Off he skipped, while Fiddy went on with her yelling, and Ebenezer first picked himself out of the dirt and the ruins of the wheelbarrow, and then took his face out of the dough which plastered it all over.

Dick had had lots of fun, and no mistake, and there was more on tap.

Fourth of July was coming, and Dick was bound to give it a full and complete celebration.

He had laid in a stock of crackers, big and little, besides sky-rockets, double-headers, and everything else in the fizzing line.

Of course the day could not pass without a racket at the expense of Ebenezer.

One of these little affairs came about in this fashion:

The big coon had received permission from Mrs. Plunket to entertain a few friends in the kitchen the evening before the great Jay.

Eben was a regular society coon, and Mrs. Eben was not a whit behind him in style.

Joanna Gilhooly was ruled out from the party on account of her unfortunate color, and was obliged to go somewhere else, or take her friends into the parlor.

Assafidity got herself up most stunningly in a yellow frock, a green waist, pink ribbons, black stockings and tan slippers, and just walked away with the biscuit.

Eight o'clock was the hour appointed for the reception, and Eben was on hand in the big square hall to meet his guests and turn them over to his wife.

He wore a long-tailed frock coat, white waistcoat, and a high collar and big white cravat, which made him look like a parson or a gambler, you could not tell which.

Owing to Eben's stoutness, his frock coat, when buttoned across his expansive stomach, showed considerable of a hiatus, the tails spreading apart by several inches.

That part proved of assistance to young Dick Plunket when working his little snap.

He meant to have some fun with Eben, you may be sure.

Shortly before the guests were expected to arrive he sneaked down into the hall with four or five big crackers hidden under his jacket.

They were of the mammoth variety, and one was all you could conveniently hold in your hand at one time if you took them around the waist.

Eben was standing by the door when Dick arrived.

"Here, you Dick, what yer want down yer 'mong de high-toned folkses?" demanded Eben.

"Yer jess go up-staiahs whar yer b'longs."

"Can't I see the dandy coons when they come in?" asked Dick.

"No, sah, yer can't, 'less yer wants ter took deir hats, and seorch dem to de reception room."

"Oh, I'll seorch 'em, you bet," chuckled Dick.

"My wo'd! I b'lebe dere am some ob dem now," grunted Eben, peering out into the darkness.

Thereupon Dick plumped one big fat cracker into each of Eben's coat-tail pockets.

The coon was too much occupied to notice the weight, and besides, his coat was buttoned.

"Walk right dis way, ladies an' ge'men," bawled Eben. "Right dis way."

Then Dick put another big cracker into each pocket.

The fuses protruded an inch or so and, owing to the spreading coat-tails were easily gotten at.

In came the society coons and Eben stepped back.

Assafidity joined him so as to receive the coons in good style.

The hall was as big as a room almost, with a big window on the side and doors all around.

"Glad to see youse, ge'men an' ladies; glad ter interdoce yer to dish yer yumble 'partment."

"Step right in folks an' make yerse'f promiscuss," said Fiddy, with a giddy bow.

Half a dozen coons and wenches now swarmed in, and Eben began to do the hand-shaking act.

There was Mr. Washington Pye and his sister Miss Creampuff, the Honorable Baxter Street and Mrs. Street, that giddy dandy, Mr. Snowflake White and a lot others, all of the cream of colored society.

Eben had his hands full, and Fiddy was helping him.

Dick was unnoticed and had slipped to the rear. It did not take him long to procure a big piece of lighted punk and then to set fire to the fuses of the cannon crackers.

The big coon was just in the act of bowing and scraping to a lot of new-comers when the fun began.

CHAPTER VI.

EBENEZER was about to welcome his high-toned friends with great effusiveness.

Then the big crackers in his tail pockets got in their work.

Dick had lighted them so that they would all go off at nearly the same time.

Fizz, fit, siss, bing!

Boom, boom, boom!

Bang, bang, bang!

That was a racket, and no mistake.

Talk of salvos of artillery! Why, they were nothing to the ructions going on behind Eben.

The big coon gave one yell, and seemed to be lifted clean off his feet.

Then he went flying through the big side window, which was open very fortunately.

If it had been shut down Eben would have gone through it all the same.

The gang of coons jumped this way and that, as if they had been shot.

The wenches yelled like all possessed, and the colored dudes drew their razors, thinking that they were attacked.

Out went Ebenezer in a cloud of fire and smoke, leaving a fiery track behind him like a comet.

He struck on his head on the gravel walk outside, and next day the hold had to be filled up.

"Massy on us! what's de matter?" screamed Fiddy.

"If dat man draws a gun on me I'll cut him deep," grunted one of the visitors.

"No man done drawed a gun on you'se, Hannibal Hambone," said the angry coon's wife.

"Yas, dey did; yas, dey did. I tol' yo', missus, I hearn um go off. Dat am what done sen' Ebenezer froo der winder."

When Ebenezer came back, however, by the way of the door, he had a different story to tell.

"Whar am dat bad boy, Dicky?" he asked.

Nobody knew.

Dick was nowhere around, having skipped.

Eben exhibited the busted ends of one or two enormous fire-crackers.

"Dat's what done frow me out de winder," he explained.

"Fo' goodness sakes alibe!"

"Dat boy make Fot' July exhibition ob me, dat what he done done, an' if I coteh um I'll wahn he jacket wuss'n he wahn mine, I tol' yer."

However, Dick knew when it was wise to appear and when it was not.

This was one of the times when he made more by being absent than by putting himself on exhibition.

"Drat dat boy anyhow," growled Ebenezer. "De trials an' tribberlations dat I has to go froo on dat feller's 'count am 'nuff ter tu'n all de hair I'se got as white as de dribblin' snow an' foteh me in sorrow to de grabe."

"I don't see what fur de missus 'lows him round yer anyhow," remarked Mrs. Crow. "Col'd folks don' hab sech pesterin' chillun like dat."

"Don' dey?" snorted her husband. "How 'bout yer sistah's brat—dat young Curry, h'm?"

"Curry am a berry good chile," sputtered Mrs. Ebenezer, getting her back up.

"Yas, he am, in yer min'! He am nuffin' but a little debbil!"

Fiddy wasn't going to stand having her sister's darling abused in that scandalous fashion.

"He am not!" she vociferated.

"Yas, he am eve'y time!"

"Well, den, Mars Dick make 'um so if he am."

That's where Ebenezer got on his ear.

He could abuse Dick himself, but nobody else must do it.

"G'lang wif yousel!" he said, with a grunt and a shrug. "Dat lilly niggah boy jess spoil Dicky, he do, an' I'se been finkin' fo' some time dat I hab ter sen' him away."

There would have been a row over the affair but for the arrival of more guests, who had to be introduced to those who were already present.

Young Dick could have fun with those coons, however, even if he were not among them.

There was a dumb-waiter connecting the dining-room up-stairs with the kitchen down-stairs, and Dick made use of this.

When the coons were all sitting around the room enjoying themselves, Dick fired a bombshell among them by way of the elevator.

He caught that fat coon, Curry, chucked him into the elevator, and yanked at the rope with all his might.

The thing struck the floor with a bounce, and out flew that fat coon and rolled half across the room.

"Sakes alibe, what am dat?"

"Goodness gracious me! de plastrin' am fallin'!"

"Look out yo'se'f, dat ting am gwine ter splode!"

Up jumped the aunties and uncles, the dandy coons, and the giddy wenches, all in a fright.

Chairs were upset, one fat aunty went into high-strikes, a thin one fainted on a fat one's lap, and there was fun alive.

Then something did explode sure enough.

It was Curry himself.

As soon as Ebenezer recognized the intruder he grabbed him, slung him across his knee, and belted him with a big tin waiter taken from the table.

Curry broke away after a few whacks and then exploded.

"Yo' sassy big fat niggah you, what call am youse got ter lick me like dat, you ole stuff stummick?"

"Nigger, nigger, neber die, nigger, nigger, nigger! Yo'm eat railroad iron, youse do! Sassy brat eat a rat, nigger!"

Oh, he was mad, that little nig was, and no error.

He sputtered and choked and spat, but he went on abusing Eben like a pirate.

"Yo'm a big lazy chump, you'm no good; you'se couldn't kill a skeeter, youse couldn't. Yah! yo' neber touched me, nigger, nigger, nigger!"

"Why don' youse hit a fellah ob yer own size, yo' nassy yaller coon! Sell yer fo' ole rags, drat yo' skin. Jes' yo' wait till I coteh yo' lone, nigger, nig—"

Ebenezer simply lifted one of his big feet, caught Curry in the rear and sent him flying out of the room and half way down the hall.

Quiet was just settling down on the company after this little affair, when Dick got in another little racket.

He had hauled up the dumb-waiter, and now he sent it down again.

This time it had on board a lot of fire-crackers, big and little, all alight.

Fft-snap-crack!

Sss-bang-fizz-snap!

Whang-dang-ft-bang!

Boom-siss-fizz-bing!

What a racket there was, anyhow!

The crackers sputtered and flew in all directions.

Just when you thought the exhibition was over, a lot more of the spiteful things went off.

The nigs jumped, the wenches yelled, and it was Bedlam broke loose.

"Look yer, Eb'nezer Crow, did youse foteh we uns to dish yer ho'se ter sear' de wits out'n us, or jiss ter hab a nice, quiet time?" asked one long,

thin, lantern-jawed, slab-sided moke, a deacon of the church.

"Ef you'd tol' us yo' was gwine ter blow us all up we'd a-stayed away, yo' betcher life," said another of the "bredren." "Sho'd fluk a man ob yo' age 'd hab a little mo' sense, Brer Crow."

"Dat ting amn't mah fault 'tall, ge'men an' ladies," protested the big nig. "Dere am a young feller in dis yer ho'se what am a reg'lar li'l imp, an' dat am de goshpul trufe."

"Dat boy Dicky he made me mo' trials an' tribberlations dan you knows on, ge'men, an' some ob dese days I fluk I go jess 'stracted wif him fool-in's."

"Yer neber see sech a little dibbil in all yo' bo'n in der ribs?"

Hambone, with his arms at right angles to his body, a tall hat on his bulging forehead, and a big club stick in his hand.

He caught one of his big patent leather, white over-gaiter feet, on that rope to begin with.

Then he tried to kick a hole out of the roof of Heaven with his cther foot.

His hat went one way and the stick caught Miss Salamantha Soapsuds in the ribs and made her squeal.

Hannibal was nearly split in two, and then sat down on the end of old Billjohns' spine.

"Wow! g'off me, nigger!"

"Who frow dat piece o' o'ange peel an' hit me in der ribs?"

He did more stunts than tight-rope performers generally do, however, ending up by standing on his head, with the lantern hanging on the limb of a tree ten feet above the ground.

"Wow! Who de dickums cotch me by de leg?" he muttered, when he got up.

Then he saw the rope, and, leaving the lantern where it had lodged when it flew out of his hand, he went back to the house, growling to himself:

"I'll bet two dollahs an' a quanta dat young Dick Plunket fix up dat yer rope. He am de bery worst boy in de hull willage, an' if he'd stayed in Yurup, I wouldn't 'a had no trials an' tribberlations to speak ob."

"Dis am a weary worl' anyhow, but if I git



The big coon gave one yell, and seemed to be lifted clean off his feet. Then he went flying through a big side window, which was open very fortunately. If it had been shut down Eben would have gone through it all the same.

days, an' I say it 'stinotly, ef I is a membah ob de chu'ch in good standin', ge'men, an' if I cotch dat boy I done broke him jaw if I lose my place a-fah."

Dick left the coons alone after that.

That is, he did not bother them until the party broke up.

At that time he had gotten ready another dandy racket.

It was nothing more or less than stretching a stout rope across the path leading from the back door to the gate at a height of five or six inches.

You can imagine the fuss that that rope caused among those coons.

First came Brother Billjohns with Sister Billjohns tagging a step or two behind, like the tail of a kite.

Old Billjohns caught one foot on that rope, swung out both hands, one of which held a big cotton umbrella, and swiped Mrs. Billjohns in the mouth.

Down went the lady all in a heap, while her husband fell the other way and scraped up the gravel with his flat nose.

Sister Glorianna Bonnetstring fell over Sister Billjohns, and then there was more fun.

Then along came that dude darky, Mr. Hannibal

"Don' yo' talk to me like dat, niggah, or I'll cutchah!"

Ebenezer came hurrying out with a lantern to see what the trouble was.

No more coons had tripped over the rope, but several had fallen over those already on the ground.

"Fo' massy sakes, ge'men, what am de row?"

Brother Billjohns, after pasting Hannibal Hambone in the jaw, answered this question.

"Yo' know bery well what am de matter, Eb'nezer Crow," he sputtered, "an' dis am de las' time I see comin' to see yer, an' if you spoke to me agin sah, I'll break yer mouf."

Then Brother Billjohns went off with his wife lagging behind him, and all the other coons followed.

Some of them missed the rope and others did not, but they all got away, and all of them declared Ebenezer to be a big chump.

"'Clar' fo' goodness, I donno what ails dem niggahs!" he muttered, "less dat Dicky boy done dig a hole fo' dem ter fall inter."

Then he went out to investigate.

He would have done better to stay in the house. Despite his lantern he was caught by that tight

rope himself.

my fls' on dat Dicky boy he'll tink he neber was so tiahed out befo' or since."

The next day was the Fourth, and you would better believe that Dick enjoyed himself.

The first thing he did was to go upon the roof and drop a pack of lighted firecrackers down the flue which connected with Ebenezer's room.

There was no danger of fire, but it scared the big coon so that he jumped out of bed, fell over himself, upset the washstand and livened things up generally.

After that he turned his attention to Miss Gillyhooley.

Joanna did not love him to distraction, and perhaps that is why he wanted to give her a roast.

He put a lot of loud sounding, long-distance torpedoes on top of the kitchen door, the inside one, leaving it ajar, and waited in a dark corner of the hall for Joanna.

When she came down, Dick suddenly jumped out and yelled at the top of his voice.

"Rats, you tarrier, rats!"

Joanna jumped, yelled, and dashed open the door, which she immediately banged behind her.

Bang—bang—bang!

Some of the torpedoes fell on the floor and went

off, while others got jammed in the panels and did the same thing.

It was all the same thing, and there was a terrible snapping and banging for a few seconds.

"Oh, murder! It's shot I am!" howled Joanna.

Then that bad boy giggled through the keyhole, and went off up-stairs.

"That bye'll be the deat' av me wid his torpiddoes and powdher crackers," muttered Joanna. "Sure, it's a great pity they didn't drown him an the way over from th' ould country."

Dick, having given Joanna a daisy-old fright, now went off and amused himself till breakfast time in making all the noise he could.

Along in the forenoon came Bertie Smith, Rose Plunket's prize dude, and then Dick had some more fun.

Bertie wore very wide, white trousers, a very wide, red and white sash, and a red and black blazer with very wide stripes.

The only thing about him that was not very wide, was his brain capacity, and that was run on the narrow-gauge system.

"Ah there, Slimwit, how are they running?" asked Dick, as Bertie appeared.

"Is yaw sistah abaout?" asked Bertie, with a real English accent, dontcherknow.

"Is she a boat?" replied Dick. "No, she is not a boat, though she might give you a smack."

"Aw, you don't undahstand me, deah boy. I didn't say a bout, dontcherknow, I said was she abaout. Only fauncy me calling yaw sistah a bout, deah boy."

"Oh, yes, she's not a boat but a boat, ha-ha. I think I catch on. How poorly you speak English since you came from England. Funny, isn't it?"

"Can I see yaw sistah, deah boy?" asked the poor dude, ignoring Dick's placid remarks.

"Can you see her?" and Dick looked all around. "No, I don't think you can, at least not with that pane of glass in your eye. I can't see her myself, and my eyes are good."

The poor dude was getting very tired.

"I think I'll awsk at the daw if I may see yaw sistah," he remarked, crossing the lawn.

"Well, why didn't you say so?" chuckled Dick, throwing a lighted cracker of huge dimensions at the dude's feet.

Poor Bertie thought he was shot when that thing went off.

He turned heels over head in the air, and slid six feet on the seat of his giddy white trousers.

"The green is striking through again, as Sneezzer would say," remarked Dick when Bertie picked himself up and walked off.

"Yaw a howid, wude fellah," said Bertie, but Dick only laughed at him, and went away to hunt up another racket.

Not long after this, Rose and Bertie came out to take a stroll.

Rose was gotten up in a very swagger fashion, with a saucy jacket, a boy's collar, a glazed hat, patent leather shoes and straight skirt, and looked quite stunning.

"It would be too bad to make her jump," thought Dick. "She'd burst her collar, sure as guns."

He permitted the couple to go on unmolested, and looked elsewhere for fun.

The day passed off very successfully, and Dick went to bed tired out, but with the serene consciousness of having had a dandy time, take it all together.

Not many days after this, Bertie Smith called to see Rose, leaving his high dicer bottom up on the hall stand.

Along came Dick while Bertie was in the parlor, and caught on to the topper, as they call it in England.

The young fellow saw it, grinned and skipped off to the professor's studio.

The latter place was a depot for rubbish of all kinds, as I have before remarked.

Consequently Dick found just what he wanted, a small and quite heavy block of iron, used by the professor in tinkering at the parts of machinery, or the models thereof, upon which he worked.

Dick collared this impromptu anvil, took it down stairs and deposited it in Bertie's high hat.

Having finished his call, the dude proceeded to say adieu.

There was to be more ado about it than he supposed.

Dick was within hearing but out of sight.

"Aw, good ahftahnoon," said Bertie grabbing his hat.

The latter refused to come at his call.

"Extremely heavy weathah heah, qwaite enawwating, don't yer know," said Bertie trying to lift the hat again.

Dick, by the way, had laid a disk of white paper on top of the weight in the hat.

It is not likely that Bertie would have seen the iron if he had not done so, being hindered by his single eye-glass.

"Do you think so?" said Rose. "I thought the air was particularly bracing to-day."

"Aw? it's vewy stwange, but I feel quite weak, don't cher know," and Bertie tugged at his hat.

It was lucky that the weight inside the latter was a tight fit.

The dude put on his dicer, which fitted him too much, right away, and came down about his ears.

"Vewy stwange how heavy my top hat feels, don't cher know," he remarked. "Theah must be something in the aiah. Good-ahftahnoon, Miss Wose."

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Smith."

When Bertie got out in the air he still continued to feel that heaviness of which he had complained.

Somehow he did not seem to think that it might be his hat which would come away down on his head in spite of all he could do.

In spite of the cool bracing breezes he kept getting hotter and hotter, the sweat pouring down his face in rivers.

Finally he took off his hat to mop his perspiring brow with his blue silk handkerchief.

The paper remained on top of his head and the weight in his hat was unmasked.

Bertie saw it of course.

He had brains enough to fake a tumble.

He dumped the iron out, at the cost of no little damage to the dicer, and remarked angrily:

"I'll bet hawf a crown that Mistah Richard put that howid thing in theah. Weally, I am vewy much tempted to mawdah that boy, I am weally. I shall have to play some wetuliating twick upon him in wetawu, I shall weally."

Imagine that dude trying to work off snaps on a professional like young Dick Plunket.

It was really quite absurd, don't you know.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. BERTIE SMITH, the Anglo-maniac, was determined to york a return snap on Dick to pay up for the latter having put an anvil in his high hat.

If Mr. Bertie Smith had come to me for advice in the matter I would gently but firmly have requested him not to monkey with young Dick Plunket.

Mr. Bertie Smith did not know as much about Dick as we do, however.

He had been made a fool of on several occasions by Dick, and he thought that the only way to get square was to make a fool of Dick.

That would have been all right enough if he had been sufficiently smart to play tricks upon Dick.

He was not.

Having made his vow to get hunk on Dick, he set off toward the gate and soon came upon Ebenezer, watering the lawn with a garden hose.

"Aw, that's the negwo butlah," thought Bertie. "I've no doubt he suffahs a gweat deal fwom that howid fellah's twicks. I'll absk him to help me."

No sooner said than done.

"I say, you fellah!" called Bertie to Ebenezer.

The latter went right on with his sprinkling.

"Aw, cawn't yah heah anything, fellah? What the deuce is his name, anyhow?"

Eben did not suppose that the dude was talking to him.

He paid no attention and kept on watering the lawn.

"Aw, say—I mean you, niggah! Look heah, cawn't you?"

That made Ebenezer start and look up.

Then he turned around, garden hose and all.

It was probably absent-mindedness on Eben's part, but he held the nozzle of the hose on a line with his stomach and straight out.

Bertie was just advancing to ask Ebenezer a question when a stream of water took him right in the top button of his waistcoat.

From there it spattered all over his dazzling shirt front and over his three story choker.

Perhaps Ebenezer was not so absent minded as he seemed.

He had decided objections to being reminded of his color, and that might have been his way of resenting the dude's offensive remarks.

Over went Bertie on the lawn, his hat flying one way, his stick another.

Then Eben was all apologies and excuse.

"Mussy me, what I done dat time?" he cried. "You'll scuse me, sah, won' yo?" I get's so fo'getful sometimes dat I don' scussly know what I'm doin' on."

Bertie scrambled to his feet, looking and feeling very sick.

"I weally believe you did that on pawpose," he remarked.

"No, I didn', 'deed I didn', sah," protested Ebenezer. "Wouldn' be so disrespectable fo' de won', sah, dat I wouldn'. What was yo' sayin', sah?"

Bertie ought to have known better than to trust the big coon after that little experience, but he did not.

"I was going to ahsk you if you waw vewy fond of Mahstah Dick," said the dude.

"Am I vewy fon' ob um?" muttered Eben. "Oh, yas, I'se vewy fon' ob um, I jess like ter took a club to um, dat's how fon' ob um I is."

"Aw, does he annoy you vewy much, Mistah Owow? I believe that is yaw name, is it not?"

"Yas'r, dat am my name, Eb'nezer Crow. Yo' wanter know if dat Dicky boy pestah me vewy much?"

"Yas."

"Deed he do, sah, 'deed he do, but I'se gwine ter lambaster him some ob dese days so dat he won' fo'get it, sah."

"Yaw going to do what? I don't weally think I compwehend."

"I'se gwine ter guv it to um right in de neck, dat's what I'se gwine ter do. Dat boy am too sassy fo' anything."

"Yas, I fahney he is. I am vewy much pleased to heah you say yaw going to punish him. Don't you suppose we could work togethah in this mat-tah?"

"Does yer mean dat mean' you is to put up a job on Dicky?" asked Ebenezer.

"Yes, I fahney that's what you call it, don't cher know."

Eben was somewhat dull of comprehension, but not enough so to prevent him from seeing his way to a snap on the dude.

If Dick worked snaps on him why couldn't he do the same on the slim?

There was clearly no valid reasons against such a proceeding.

"H'm! dat am de bery ting," he remarked. "I show you how to wo'k a racket on dat Dicky boy an' jes' make him feel sick."

"Yas, that will be awfully jolly, deah boy, don't cher know," and Bertie gave Eben a slap on the back in the exuberance of his joy.

"Yah-yah, won' it?" chuckled Ebenezer.

Then he lifted one of his big hands and smote the chippie between the shoulder blades.

Well, he didn't quite kill him, but Bertie thought he was done for during two or three anxious moments.

The poor dude went flying and sprawled out on the wet grass ten feet away from yhere he had stood.

"Ho, ho! dat am bes' yet!" howled Eben. "Oh, lan' ob glory, didn' I make dat dude spin! 'Clar' ter goodness I habn't had so much fun in a yeah. Wow! didn' I jess guv him a good un?"

"Oh, massy fo' goodness! deary mel de idee ob dat slim Jim a-tryin' fo' ter wo'k rackets on dat Dicky boy! Dat am jess too funny fo' anything, an' I wo'k a racket on um m'own self!"

Then away went Ebenezer, dragging the hose after him and laughing ready to split at the success of his own gag.

For a first effort, tried on an easy subject, it was a brilliant success, and Ebenezer felt highly delighted.

Not so Mr. Bertie Smith, however.

The garden hose had been playing uninterruptedly for several minutes over that part of the lawn, and the poor dude was drenched from head to foot.

He arose, feeling very sad, picked up his hat and his stick and took himself off, mournfully musing:

"I'll bet a copper that the niggah was hiahed by that howid boy to cause me all this trouble. I de-clah, I'll nevah come heah any more till the wude fellah is sent away, don't cher know."

Dick caught on to the racket from hearing Ebenezer laughing so vociferously, and although he had not seen it, he enjoyed hearing the coon tell about it afterwards.

"What a sappy that chappie must have been, to think he could fool your humble servant," he chuckled to himself. "Served him just right to have Sneezzer get the best of him."

Poor Bertie stayed away from the Plunkets for some time after that, but Dick didn't lose any sleep over it.

He had enough victims and to spare to work rackets on, and if one sneaked out, there were always others to take his place.

The professor was the first to catch it.

That eccentric old fossil was very fond of collecting coins, not particularly the current pieces of the government, but any old truck he could find.

He had also, of late, become interested in buried treasures, the fortunes of Captain Kidd, Blackbeard, Redhead and other pirates.

Every old bit of printing or of manuscript which related to such matters that came into his possession was treasured with great delight.

He insisted that some of the money hoarded up by the buccaneers of old had been buried on the farm owned by Mrs. Plunket, and he was determined to find it.

The records spoke of it, he said, although the farm wasn't within a hundred miles of the coast, or of any place where the freebooters were likely to land.

However, that was nothing, if the records said the money was there, and he began to dig.

That is to say, he did his digging by proxy, Ebenezer being the actual laborer.

Poor Eben grunted and sweated over this work—it was in the balmy month of July, you may recollect—and made a great kick over it as well.

"It am too late to plant a gyarden," he growled, "an' too early to put in yo' spring wheat, an' 'sides dat, dese ain' no places fo' raisin' gyarden truck anyhow."

The places where the professor did his digging were in the woods, or in the swamp, or near ledges of rock by the way.

Eben was not a first-class farmer, but he did

shoes, back number fire-shovels, cast off-hats and everything else she could get hold off.

Dick cabbaged a lot of her gilt powder and varnish, and gilded the coins till they looked like gold.

Then he put his something else in the bottom of the old cash box and the bogus gold on top.

The box he buried in a spot near where Eben had been digging, and then his plot was nearly ready.

All that was wanting was to give Professor Dinglebus an incentive to dig himself.

This was accomplished thusly:

Taking an old bit of paper torn out of an ancient account book, and smoking it so as to make it look

I said. I knew it must be here. Run and get the spade, Richard!"

"There it is yonder," said Dick, pointing to a spade which he had himself left in a pile of loose earth.

"Measure off six feet due south from the old oak, Richard," said the professor, excitedly, "and dig. The treasure is here, my boy, and we will find it."

"Does the paper say so?" asked Dick.

"Yes, and it must be so. This is very rare and old, written in ancient English. I wonder what the curse can be?"

"Perhaps we won't find it if I dig," said Dick.

"H'm! yes, ah, maybe so, There might be some-



Then Dick got to work. He ran ahead and threw two or three packs of lighted crackers under the horses' feet. He threw another pack in advance of them. Then he tossed a pack or two in the air for luck.

Crack—snap—bang! The picnic had a dandy send off, you bet.

know that those were not in the best places in which to raise crops.

"Nebber see sech a man as de 'fessor," muttered Ebenezer, after digging away at the root of an old tree half the morning. "Yo' kean't raise tatures in dish yer place, an' co'n wouldn' grow yer nudder, 'cause dey ain' sun 'nuff."

"Reckon he am gone clean off him haid, ef he tink he can raise anyting yer, and den he dig too deep fur salary or any of dem tings. 'Clar' fo' goodness ef I don' strike."

The digging took a rest after that, but Dick was onto the snap with both feet.

"It'll tickle the professor to death to find some money hidden away here," he remarked, "and it'll give me a chance for a snap beside."

Then that bad young man got an old cash box, put a lot of old copper coins in the top compartment, and something else under the slide in the bottom.

The copper was worthless, and was English, Irish, French, Dutch and everything else, some of it being prigged from the professor's own collection, and the rest picked up here and there.

Dick's sister had caught the gilding craze about that time, and had gilded plaster ornaments, old

older yet, he took a stub pen and some pale ink, and wrote the following:

"Whoever will digge in a spotte sixe feete due south from ye olde oake tree in ye so' easte corner of ye orchard wille finde ye hidden treasure of ye greate Captain Kidde, but let him beware of the curse which clings to ye."

Here the manuscript broke off quite short, the paper being torn.

Having fixed up the incentive, Dick stuck it in an old leather wallet and chucked it on a pile of earth turned up by Eben.

The next morning Dick saw the professor nosing around the orchard, and, going up to him, asked:

"Looking for anything, uncle?"

"It's very strange," muttered the old professor.

"The old records speak of—"

Just then Dick kicked the old wallet.

"What's that?" cried the professor, making a dart at it.

It came to pieces in his nervous clutch—ha! ha!—and the scrap of paper dropped out.

Dinglebus grabbed it, looked at it through his spectacles, and said:

"H'm, ha, yes, very wonderful, confirms what

thing in that," observed the professor, studying the old manuscript again.

Dick wanted to laugh, but he held in.

He measured off six feet due south from the old oak and handed the professor the spade.

Dinglebus began to dig, and had turned up only a clod or two of earth, when the cash-box was exposed to view.

He dropped that spade as if it were red hot, and then froze onto that cash-box in a jiffy.

"At last!" he gurgled, as he fumbled at the hasp. "I knew it, I knew it. Richard, our fortunes are made."

Then he opened the box.

Gold, ha-ha, glittering gold lay beneath his spectacles.

"Ah, h'm, yes, gold, just as I supposed," he remarked. "Look for yourself, Richard."

Dick took a handful of the snide gold and said, wisely:

"Yes, it looks very much like gold."

"Looks like it! It is gold!" cried the professor emptying the stuff into his hat.

"H'm, ha, there appears to be another compartment," he muttered. "I wonder if the bottom comes out."

He gave it a tug and it did come out, sure enough.

Something else came out as well.

Dick had fixed up a little infernal machine of his own in the bottom of the box.

Pulling out the slide scratched a match on a piece of sand paper and set fire to a small quantity of gunpowder.

Whiff-bang!

The box flew out of the professor's hands and he was nearly scared into fits.

He dusted out of that in very sudden style, thinking that Captain Kidd's curse was upon him and that was the last time he dug for the pirates' gold.

One pleasant Saturday, about this time some of the coons in the neighborhood got up a picnic in some woods a few miles from Mrs. Plunket's place.

It was too far to walk and not very convenient to reach by rail, wagons being the best method of transportation.

The Crows were going and so were several other coons in their immediate vicinity, and Ebenezer asked for the use of two horses and a big farm wagon with seats running lengthwise along the sides.

"Yo' tell dem niggahs to be up to de ho'se on time," said Ebenezer to one of the committee of arrangements, "an' I take 'em 'long o' me, I ain' gwine ter wait fo' anny ob 'em aftah ten o'clock an' yo' kin' tol' 'em dat fo' me."

"I reckon dey gets dere in time, Eb'nezer," said the committeeman. "Don' yo' fret 'bout dat."

"Bet yer life I ain' doin' no frettin', sah," said Ebenezer with a snort. "It am de folkses what gits lef' what do de frettin' I reckon."

Seeing that Ebenezer was to furnish the wagon and team, it was not for the committee to dictate.

"How many yo' cal'ulate youse kin cary in dat waggin, Mistah Crow?" asked the committee.

"No mo'n it kin hol' sah," said Ebenezer, stiffly. "De col'd folks f'om jess roun' yer am 'spected ter go an' dar ain't no room fo' no mo'. Yo' needn't flink I'se gwine ter cary all de town, sah."

Ebenezer could say just what he liked under the circumstances, and the committee could not help itself.

"Who am dey?" the committee asked, nevertheless.

"Dere am me an' my wife, Sam Johnsing an' he wife an' mudder-in-law; Ham Harris an' lady; Jeff Crullers an' de two wimmen folkses; 'Siah Bowser an' his woman, an' de doctah and Miss Fldgers, an' Curry fo' to hang on behin' an' hol' de oder folkses in."

"De waggin kin hol' mo'n dat, Mistah Crow. Couldn' yo' put in free or fo' mo' ob yo' neighbors?"

"No, sah? Dat am all dat de waggin kin hol', sah."

It would not hold all that many if Ebenezer had only known it.

The committee had to be satisfied, and he went away.

On Saturday morning the coons came trooping up to the back door of the Plunket house loaded down with baskets, boxes and bundles.

These contained provisions which were to be consumed at the picnic.

Ebenezer kicked when he saw the array.

"Gorry mighty! do yer 'spect I'se got a freight kyar to ca'y all dat stuff?" he snorted. "Why didn' yo' sin' it by de oder waggin?"

"Guess youse kin put it undah de seats, kean't yer?" asked Ham Harris. "It don' took up no room dat a way, does it?"

"It am de load what I'se dejectin' ter," muttered Eben.

The horses could manage well enough, but Ebenezer wanted to kick, and he did kick.

However, the other coons overruled his objections and the grub was stuck under the seats and piled up forward.

Ebenezer was to drive and he now got on the box and took up the ribbons.

Then the darkies piled in, sitting on both sides of the long wagon.

Fiddy sat up front next to the doctor, Ham Harris and lady came next and Sam Johnsing supported by his wife and mother-in-law piled in next to him.

The other side was soon filled up and Curry stood on the step holding on by the straps.

That was a dandy lot of coons and no error.

The gayest ribbons, the swaggiest toilets, the smartest suits and the tallest and glossiest silk ties were to be seen.

Ebenezer was the very best of Jehus and he cocked his head around and cracked his whip in the best professional style.

"Am yo' all ready?" he shouted. "Dis yere coach am gwine ter start right on time I tol' yer."

Just then Dick came around.

He had half a dozen or more packs of crackers left over from the Fourth of July.

Here was a use for them and no mistake.

In fact, that was just what Dick thought of when he heard of the picnic.

He was pretty sure that Ebenezer would bar him out from attending.

All the same he meant to give those coons a good send off.

Hence the fire-crackers just at this moment.

"All ready?" shouted Eben on the box.

"Yas'r—let her go!"

Ebenezer did let her go, and off they started.

"Hooray!" yelled all the coons.

"Bully!" howled Curry on the back-door step of the wagon.

Then Dick got to work.

He ran ahead and threw two or three packs of lighted crackers under the horses' feet.

He threw another pack in advance of them.

Then he tossed a pack or two in the air for luck.

Crack—snap—bang!

The picnic had a dandy send off, you bet.

How long would it last?

CHAPTER VIII.

THAT wagon load of black birds, driven by Ebenezer Crow, was destined to get into trouble at the start.

The horses had the strongest objections to having a lot of firecrackers snapping and banging about their feet and over their heads.

They did not like it for a cent, in fact, and literally and allegorically kicked.

They also bolted, the one idea in their heads being to get away from the cause of annoyance.

Ebenezer, elegant Jehu that he was, had no tap-lica in trying to hold in those restive, festive nags.

About all that he could do was to keep them in the middle of the road.

As far as holding them in went, however, he was like the fish that jumped out of the basket, that is to say he wasn't in it.

The load of coons did not like this sort of riding. First of all the women folks set up a terrible yelling, such as only a lot of coons know how to yell in fact.

After the yelling had gotten well under way the coons began to want to get out.

Some of them got out before they wanted to, in fact.

One of these was Curry, the little poly-poly coon at the stern.

Mrs. Sam Johnsing's mother, a woman weighing nearly three hundred pounds, started the ball a-rolling.

She jumped up, made one dive for the tail-end of the big wagon, and went out like a shot from a cannon.

Curry couldn't stand any such assault as that.

Out he went, or rather, down, for he was on the step holding on by a strap.

If Sam Johnsing's mother-in-law had ever sat upon that coon he would have been pressed flat.

Luckily for him he rolled into a ditch.

The old lady remained outside, and Curry escaped.

The horses were still going, you must understand, although they had left the crackers behind.

"Whoa dar, you or'nary critters!" roared Ebenezer.

The ordinary creatures would not stop for his say so, however.

Meanwhile those coons were dropping off, or falling off, one at a time in couples and in sections.

They were spilled along the road like blackberries out of a basket when the picker thereof is ordered out of the lot by a bull.

No one thought of grace and dignity, you can bet.

Those who wanted to get out did so as rapidly as possible without regard to how they landed.

Those who did not want to get out were fired out by those who did.

Some landed on their heads with their feet in the air and their legs waving about like weather-vanes gone crazy.

Some lighted upon their feet all serene, but did not remain so long enough to have their pictures taken.

There were those who did not care how they landed so long as they got out, and these fell on their backs, slid on their stomachs and performed all sorts of gymnastic feats.

"Lor' bress mah soul! I'se killed fo' shuah!"

"Take yo' foot out ob my mouf, niggah!"

"Lan' ob goodness an' glory! I'se sated at las'!"

"Whoa dere yo' critters!"

"Oh, golly! Is I heah or somewheahs else, I wondah."

Down the hill went the team, and in two minutes there wasn't a single coon in the wagon except Ebenezer.

The others were scattered all along the road at frequent intervals.

The grub baskets went the same way as the coons.

Bumping, bouncing, jumping and dancing, out went those baskets, bundles and parcels of lunch. Some of them flew open and their contents were scattered over the road.

Cold ham, potted jam, bread and butter, pie, pickles and cake, all got mixed up together.

A basket would strike the ground, fly open like a jack-in-a-box, and out would pop grub of all sorts.

Some of them rolled down hill without coming open, but it is very doubtful if the contents were improved thereby.

One or two jugs of cider and a couple of demi-johns of something harder, rolled out, struck a stone and went to smash.

The materials for a stone fence were ready to hand if anybody cared for it.

The wagon reached the bottom of the hill at last, when there was nothing else left in it except the driver.

"Whoa dar, goldurn youse!" roared Ebenezer, sawing on the reins.

The horses concluded to stand still, having done all the mischief they could.

Dick had seen the whole business from the top of the hill, and he stood there now and nearly laughed himself sick over the antics of those coons.

"I'll bet fifty cents and a collar button," he remarked, "that those coons won't trust Sneezzer again."

The young fellow was right, as he usually was.

When those mokes came down the hill, they found Ebenezer waiting for them.

They concluded to let him wait.

"Wha' keind ob drivah does yer call yerse'f?" asked Ham Harris. "I would n' trus' yer ter drike a swill caht. I wouldn't."

"Ef Miss Plunket hiah yo' ter drike the ca'age, she get mighty stuck, I can tell her," added Sam Johnson.

"Yo' don' get me in dat yer waggin agin, Eb'nezer, an' yo' drike stret back home fo' all I care."

"Sassy or'nary niggah!" sputtered Sam's mother-in-law. "I reckon I'se done bus' somefin', an' I know I ain't got free good soun' ribs lef' in my body."

"Ain' no dangah ob dat, missus," chuckled Eben. "Yo' m' got too much fat on yo' ribs fo' dem to broke so easy as dat."

"Fat, is I?" chuckled the lady. "Sam Johnsing, how kin yo' stan' dere an' heah me 'bused like o' dat."

"Dis lady an' my moder-in-law, Mistah Crow," remarked Sam with great dignity.

"Well, Sam'l, I feels very sorry fo' youse," said Ebenezer, consolingly, "but I kean't help it. Yo' bettah gib her de shake soon as yo' kin, ef yo' am any way fon' ob yo' wife, on'y don' blame me fo' it, Sam. Ef you'd axed me I'd ha' tol' yo' not ter hab de ole woman a libin' wif youse."

This back handed apology did not seem to suit either Sam or his mother-in-law worth speaking of.

"Don' yo' stan' dere an' let dat big niggah talk 'bout me like dat, Sam Johnsing, if yo' am got any spunk," said the lady herself.

"Yo' wanter be very keerful how yo' spoke. She am undah mah protection, an' I ain' gwine ter let no niggah insult her, I tol' yer."

That seemed to tickle Ebenezer very much.

"She am undah yo' protection, am she, Sam'l," he chuckled, letting out a horse laugh with that big voice of his. "Yah, yah, dat am de bes' yet. Undah yo' protection, hey? De poo' deah lamb! She need it, very much, Sam, but ef she faint at anything, yo' gotter hire a derriek befo' youse kin get her on her feet again. Yah, yah, yah! Wow! undah yo' protection. Wall, if dat ain' de funnies' ting I eber heerd."

Other coons had now arrived, nearly the whole party in fact.

They were a sad looking lot, you bet.

Muddy dresses, rumpled skirts, dented hats, wilted collars, bonnets busted, and faces scratched.

That's how they looked, and they felt just as bad.

At first they had very little to say.

"All abo'd," cried Ebenezer.

Then the coons began to talk.

They abused their driver like a horse-thief.

It was quite lucky for Ebenezer that he was still on the box.

If he had not been, he might have been in a box by the time those angry nigs got through with him.

"All abo'd!" cried one. "Does yo' fink we am gwine ter trus' ourse'fs wif youse ter drike? Well, I guess not."

"Reckon I kin drike as good as any g'eman yer," snorted Eben.

"No, sah, yo' kean't!"

"Go home, niggah!"

"Yo' am no good."
 "Rats, yo' niggah, rats!"

It is quite likely that some of these spicy remarks would not have been made, if Ebenezer had been on the ground.

I'd jis' like ter see any of youse smaht niggahs hold in a team ob hosses in de middle ob a lot ob flaherickahs," snorted Ebenezer. "Ef anyone ob yo' coons had been on de box, de hull team and de wagon an' ev'ying would ha' clean gone ter smash. I'se tellin' yer."

It did not make any difference, however.

The women coons would not go in that wagon if Ebenezer drove.

She was fat herself and fatter than Ebenezer in the bargain.

She took up the cudgels in defense of obesity at once.

"Reckon dey ain' any mo' disoblign' dan dem skinny folks," she sputtered. "Jess yo' be careful what yo' am sayin' ob, Sam Johnsing. I amn't useter bein' 'sulted, I isn', an' yo'd better know it fus' as well as las', yo' slim-waisted niggah. Yo' tink 'cause I'se a poo' unpurcted female dat yo' kin ride all ober me, but yer kean't, I tol' yer dat much."

Sam kept still after that and the picnickers proceeded to walk to the grounds.

They went for him, hammer and tongs, all at once and nobody first.

Sam Johnsing grabbed him on one side, Ham Harris took the other, the mother-in-law tackled him behind and some one else took him in front.

It was all day with Ebenezer in a few moments.

Mrs. Eben had not been left, but she did not happen to be around just then.

That big coon had his hands full in a jiffy.

He wasn't on the box this time, nor did he have a whip in his hand.

In two shakes his coat was ripped from top to bottom, his waistcoat was torn to ribbons, his collar was a wreck and his shirt was as full of holes as a fish net.



Some landed on their heads with their feet in the air and their legs waving about like weather-vanes gone crazy. Some lighted upon their feet all serene, but did not remain so long enough to have their pictures taken.

Moreover, they threatened to never speak to their men folks if they went.

That settled it.

Ebenezer would have to go alone if he went to the picnic.

He was just obstinate enough to do it.

"Good-day, yo' cranky niggah," he said. "I'se gwine to dat pickanick all by my lones, an' I spees ter see youse when de ting am half ober. Ef any ob youse coons tink youse gwine ter ride back wif me, yo' am mistaken, for I wouldn't take one ob yo' if yo' was ter gib me fo'ty dollahs a head. G'long dere, yo' critters."

Away drove Ebenezer, alone in his glory, and the coons had to walk.

Then they began to think that perhaps they had been a trifle too obstinate.

It was too late now, however.

In a few minutes Ebenezer, the big wagon and the horses were lost to sight.

"Wull," exclaimed Mrs. Sam Johnson, "I didn't tink dat niggah would be so plaguey mean. I de-clar' fo' it, I didn't."

"Dem fat niggahs am allus disoblign' anyhow," muttered Sam.

This was a reflection upon the lady's mother, as Sam might have known.

On the way hither they were passed by young Dick Plunket in a light wagon.

He had concluded to take in the racket on his own account.

"Guess Sneezer got mad and wouldn't take 'em up again," he laughed as he looked at the weary pedestrians. "That'll make all the more fun."

When Dick arrived at the grounds, the colored contingent was enjoying itself immensely, and Ebenezer was one of the lions of the day.

The young fellow hitched up outside of the grounds and proceeded to amuse himself without troubling the coons.

The fun had not really begun for him, as he desired to await the arrival of the party on foot.

There was a dance going on upon a platform built for saltatorial exercises, and Eben led the cotillion.

He was getting in his pigeon-wings, double shuffles, balance to partners, and was the biggest thing on the boards in the all hands around, when the pedestrian party came on the grounds.

"Balance down de middle," cried the violinist.

Eben grabbed his partner and started down the middle as though he owned the whole business.

The stranded coons caught sight of him at that very moment.

Before he could even strike back he was hustled off that dancing floor and sprawled across a rotten stump.

Then, fearing that he might return, the coons drew their razors and waited for him.

The enemies that they encountered, however, were razor proof.

The stump, across which Eben had been thrown, was inhabited.

There were several families, and large ones at that, of yellow-jacket hornets living within its heart.

One of Eben's hands went into the middle of it. It naturally stirred things up, being of generous proportions.

The big coon suddenly became aware of a great change in the temperature.

He felt, in fact, as though he had grabbed hold of a red-hot stove.

He yanked out his hand in a hurry, gave a blood-freezing shriek, and broke away.

It made no difference to him where he went, so long as he got away from that stump.

As it happened, he made a bee-line for the dancing floor.

His coming was so sudden that the pugilistic coons could not stop nor stay him.

He broke clean through their ranks and upset two or three of them, making his escape at the other side.

Some of the hornets stayed with him, but the majority remained behind.

Yellow-jackets sometimes make mistakes, although not often.

This was one of the times where they were in error.

They went for those coons hot-footed, red-handed, and all that sort of thing.

Of what avail were razors in such an emergency?

Of none whatever, and besides the women did not carry any.

The way those hornets went for those coons was something astonishing.

In two shakes the nigs were slapping and slashing at the insects, at themselves, and at each other.

The hornets did not care a copper for that sort of business.

They wormed themselves between collar and skin, they insinuated there agile bodies up trousers legs, up coat sleeves and everywhere else in fact.

Wherever there was a chance to plant their hot feet on a coon's hide, there they went and got in their finest work.

Differences in age, sex, station or previous condition of servitude were not considered by them.

Coons, wenches or kids, it was all the same to them.

Talk about fancy dancing then!

There were some of the liveliest steps you ever saw, inside or outside of a ball-room.

The gyrations, evolutions, contortion and gymnastic feats of those mokes were things to remember in after years.

No band of dancing dervishes, no battalion of the Salvation Army, no horde of wild Bedouins, ever went through such performances.

Here is just where I can get in that fine old crusted, white-whiskered, tottering-on-the-brink-of-the-grave expression: "The scene beggared all description."

It just did, and no mistake.

A fracas between one man and one hornet, or even a dozen, is lively enough in all conscience.

Imagine then the hilarity of a battle between a dozen coons and two or three hundred hornets, all with their fighting clothes on.

Well, I won't attempt to tell it.

You can imagine the end by what went before.

Such a howling, yelling, screaming, hustling, jumping, scattering and rushing was never seen since the flood.

In five minutes the hornets could have had the whole dancing floor if they had so desired.

They did not, and, being sociable little fellows and anxious to please, they went with the crowd.

Some of the coons took to the river and got rid of their fiery-headed tormentors. But such a course was not open to all.

Some of the nigs could not swim.

It was hardly to be expected, either, that the ladies would take to the water.

Some of the gang fell flat on the ground, either by accident or design, and they were all right.

The hornets flew over the heads of these and went for the rest.

Not only was the dancing floor cleared, but the picnic grove as well.

The coons who had been ousted by Ebenezer made a break for his big farm wagon and took possession thereof.

Fiddy went with another crowd, but she got there all the same.

Away went those mokes, and the picnic was over.

Isn't it about time to go back to Ebenezer Crow and get him out of his trials and tribulations?

Perhaps it is, although I might continue them.

That is just what happened.

Our obese colored friend succeeded in beating off the few hornets that had remained behind, but that was not the end of his troubles.

Seeing the coons making a break for him, he turned aside and sought safety in the bush.

When the coons had gone by he went in search of his team.

He found where it had been, but he failed to connect.

In fact, somebody had got ahead of him.

I won't say that Dick did not help the other coons to find and take possession of Eben's wagon and horses.

That they did so is an indisputable fact.

Poor Ebenezer looked high and low, but all in vain.

The picnic grounds were deserted, and all the horses and vehicles had gone, when he at last came to the conclusion that he was left.

"Dem niggahs tink dey am bery smaht to run away wid de waggin an' hosses, don' dey?" he sputtered.

"Neber yo' min', honeys, yo' get yo'se'f in trouble fo' tookin' dem hosses. Dat am highway robbery, dat am, an' don' yo' fo'git it when yo' gets ter town, yo' sassy niggahs."

"Reckon I knows de penulinty fo' piracy an' all dat, and dis am jess what it am, an' if I don' sen' up ebery one of dem coons fo' six mon's, I'se on'y talkin' ter heah m'se'f spoke."

The only way to get home now was to saddle Shank's mare.

Ebenezer put that animal into requisition and started for home.

The sun was as hot as mustard now, and the walking was bad in the bargain.

It was not long before Ebenezer was sweating like a bullock.

He had made half a mile, which seemed equal to four, when he heard the sound of wheels behind him.

At last he would get a lift, and he stood by the roadside waiting for the wagon.

Yes, perhaps he would get a pick up.

Then perhaps he would not.

The approaching vehicle was a buggy with one occupant.

The occupant was young Dick Plunket.

CHAPTER IX.

"HALLO, dere, hi, dere, Dicky, stop an' took a fellah in wid youse?"

That's what Eben called out as Dick drove up.

"Ah, there, Sneezer, is that you? Take you in with me? Well, I guess not. I don't want to bust the springs."

That was all he said.

Then he drove on, and poor Ebenezer had to walk.

"Wall!" he growled, as he turned his head to avoid the dust kicked up by Dick's horse, "if dat ain' de mos' ungratefules, selishes' boy dat I eber see in all m' life! I'd jess like ter lambaster him in de jaw, so I would."

"De ideah ob him sayin' dat I broke de springs ef I get in de waggin wif him, when he knowed very well dat dem am de bes' springs in de hull lot. Dat war on'y a scuse ter get rid o' me, dat's all it was."

"Neber min' fo' ye', Mastah Dicky. I get squah on youse, jess yo' wait an' see. Some day I gibe you a lambaster in de jaw dat yo' recombemah long as yo' libe."

Abusing Dick did not do Ebenezer any good, however, as he soon discovered.

Within half an hour there were indications of rain.

That is to say, it thundered and lightnined, and the big drops began to fall so thick that there was no dodging them.

Before long it turned into a pelting rain, and Eben began to get wet.

It was what they call in Ireland a fine soft day, but that coon thought it was pretty hard.

In five minutes—and the rain kept it up all that time—he was soaked to the skin.

The water ran off him in rivers, and yet it continued to rain.

"Huh! dat's what dey calls gwine' to a picnic," he remarked, in disgust. "Blow me if I can see any picnic in dis yer ting. Mo' like a fun'el if it keeps on in dis away, I'm finkin'."

"It am all de fault ob dat sassy boy Dicky dat dis happen. Ef he'd a-took me in de buggy 'long o' he dis yer business wouldn't ha' happened."

"Neber min'; I give him a pas'e in de jaw when I done coteh 'um dat make him sorry he do dis to me, jess as shuah as yo's bo'n, an' den yo' see whedder he laff so much at dat 'ere!"

Poor Ebenezer's trials and tribulations were coming thick and fast upon him.

He was as mad as a dog with a tin kettle tied to his tail, but that did not do him any good.

The rain falls where it pleases and it did not care a rap whether Ebenezer got soaked or not.

On went that big coon, grumbling and growling, with the rain pelting him unmercifully and giving him no let up.

"Car' to goodness, ef I coteh dat Dicky boy when I gets to de bo'se I jess gib him de wors' ole trouncin' he eber get in his life, yo' see ef I don', the orn-ary critter."

It rained and it rained and it rained, and Ebenezer had to endure the whole of it.

When he had come within a quarter mile of the house, the rain stopped suddenly, the sun came out and everything was lovely.

When Ebenezer turned in at the gate he was dripping wet and there was the sun shining and no sign of rain to be seen.

He tried to sneak in without being seen, but it was no use.

First Mrs. Plunket saw him from the front piazza, where she sat reading a society novel.

"Why, Ebenezer!" she exclaimed, "you are wringing wet."

"Don' yo' 'spose I know dat. m'se'f, missus," growled Eben.

"How did you get so wet? You ought to have started home sooner."

"Dat am Mistah Dick's fault. Dat boy am de worses' I eber see."

"Well, you ought to know enough to keep away from him by this time," was the lady's consoling answer.

Eben went on and presently met Miss Rose at the side of the house.

"Why, Mr. Crow, you are sopping wet," vociferated the young lady.

"Specs I knows dat well's anybody," Miss Rose, grunted Eben.

"You ought to know better than to stay out in the rain. You will catch your death."

"Ef I do, den dat Dicky boy hab to stan' de fun'al expenses, dat's all. Dat boy orter be killed hese'f."

"Oh, yes, you always blame Dick," said Rose indignantly, "but if you weren't such a big fool you wouldn't let him play so many tricks on you."

Here was more consolation for that big nig.

He was getting it on all sides that morning.

There was more of it coming too.

When he reached the back door there was Joanna Gilhooly, hanging up clothes and singing the latest operas.

"Begorra, Ebenezer, ye're as wet as if ye'd fallen into the river," she remarked. "Faix, ye're sopping, so ye air."

This was not news to the coon by any means.

"Don' yo' tink I orter know dat," he sputtered.

"It am all dat boy Dicky's fault, an' I'se gwine to punch him head fo' dat."

"Troth, av yez worn't such a big gawk, yez wudn't let him get the besht av yez so often," retorted Joanna.

There was more cold comfort for Ebenezer.

When he entered the kitchen he found Fiddy preparing dinner.

"De lawd bress me, Eb'nezer, if yo' ain't as wet as a dish rag," the lady observed. "Specs yo' mus' hab stayed out in de rain all de mo'nin', yo' foolish niggah."

"H'm, guoss I know whar I was jess as well as yo' does!" snarled the coon. "Does yer s'pose I is a natchel bo'n fool?"

"Dat's what I allus s'pected," returned Fiddy, very calmly.

"Well, I am n't," muttered Ebenezer, in great disgust, "an' I tink yo' notter make sech remarks as dem any mo', if yer wanter keep peace in de fambly."

"Den yo' shouldn' act so foolish ef yo' don' wanter be called a natchel bo'n fool," replied Fiddy quietly.

"Ef it wasn' fo' dat bad boy Dicky I wudn' ha' got wet 'tall," growled Ebenezer.

"It am all yo' own fault fo' hangin' roun' de boy so much dat yo' gets fooled all de time," said Mrs. Crow. "Ef yo' doesn' know 'nuff ter keep away f'om him it serbes yo' jess right."

Here was more consolation for Ebenezer.

"Huh! dat am a nice ting ter say," he gurgled.

"Dat bad boy foller me all roun', watchin' fo' a chance ter play lakks onter me, an' den yo' say dat I fool roun' him. I t'ort yo' had mo' sense dan dat."

"Jess yo' el'ar out ob my kitchen, yo' ign'ant niggah," vociferated Mrs. Crow, catching up a broom. "Does yo' see how wet an' ditty-yo' am gettin' it? Who am goin' ter spond all deir time cleanin' up aftah yo', I like ter know?"

Benten at one argument, Mrs. Crow tried another, which was unanswerable.

She made the water fly when she hit Ebenezer across the back, and she caused the fur to be rampant when she took him on the head and sent his hat careering across the room.

Ebenezer began to protest, but Fiddy had the best end of the stick, and she hung onto it.

Whack!

Spat!

Biff.

A little of that sort of thing went a long way, after all, like a kind word.

Ebenezer got up and dusted with all possible speed.

"H'm 'pears ter me it am a berry col' day fo' me," he muttered, when he reached a place of refuge; "but I'se got it in fo' dat Dicky boy all de same, an' he fin' it out when I coteh um, yo' see."

Dick was not getting caught, all the same, and the probability was that by the time he did see the lively young fellow, Ebenezer would have forgotten his present state of mind regarding the boy.

As it happened, having tied up the bay during the shower, Dick had started off for another ride after the rain was over, and did not return till night.

He of course did not know how wet the poor coon had got, nor his trials and tribulations after reaching home, and, in fact, the little racket of the

Monday had passed out of his mind when he returned at night.

Ebenezer forgot it himself the next day, having plenty other things to occupy his mind.

Dick was just as ready for another lark, however, as if he hadn't just roasted Ebenezer.

He came out in the morning and saw Eben at work in the garden digging up weeds with a big hoe.

He was too busy to notice Dick, but that young fellow saw him all the same.

"I wonder if I've got any left," remarked Dick, to himself.

What he meant was one of those big crackers he had used the day before.

Ebenezer looked at Dick and the cracker, scratched his head and muttered:

"Wull! ef yo' ain' de worses boy in de whole world!"

Having so little to do around the place, Ebenezer thought it necessary, every now and then, to take a holiday and go off for a day's outing.

One of these occasions came around shortly after the last little snap which I have just recorded.

Ebenezer harnessed an old mule of his own to a two-seated wagon, and started off to enjoy himself.

There was a big basket of grub put under the seat, to say nothing of some bait in a demijohn resting alongside.

Hannibal Harris was also in favor of Curry's going in order to keep solid with Mrs. Crow.

"De boy don' take up much room, Eb'nezer," he remarked, "an' dere ain' no use in makin' a fuss ober a little fellah like dat. Yo' hahdly know he am yer."

Ebenezer knew he was there, however, when he had to squeeze over to the side to make room for the fat young nig.

He himself could easily fill two seats, and to be obliged to put up with two-thirds of one was a little too much.

Fiddy must not be crowded and neither must Curry, and consequently Eben had to suffer.

"Why kean't yo' put dat boy on de hind seat?"



Ebenezer jumped out and gave the mule another whack with the butt of the whip. "Dod rot yo' old skin, what yo' mean by dat?" muttered that mad coon. By this time all hands had got out of the wagon and off the track. The train was still coming on for all it was worth.

Skipping into the house he found just one, but it was a big one and able to make a stir in the world.

Eben was driving his hoe under a big, overgrown weed, when Dick came out with that cracker in his hand.

He gave it a toss and it fell into the middle of the wood just as Eben was about to haul it out.

One glance at that big, red cracker was enough for Eben.

It was not lighted, but that did not occur to Eben, the presence of the cracker being quite sufficient.

"Wow, who frew dat?" he yelled, making a break, chucking his hoe into the air and bolting.

The cracker flew up in the air when Eben dusted and fell on his head, and that gave him another scare.

"Wow!" he yelled again, thinking the thing was going to explode right in the middle of his wool.

Away he dusted and never stopped till he reached the house, when he paused to listen for the report of the cracker.

He would have been waiting there yet if Dick had not come along with that cracker in his hand.

They were going to a place about ten miles away, and the chance was that they might do some fishing, hence the bait.

Such trifles as rods, reels, and lines were forgotten in the hurry of departure, but the bait was attended to, you bet.

Never forget your bait, whatever else you do, for you can't be a good fisherman without it.

Off started the party, which consisted of Ebenezer and his wife and Curry on the front seat and Hannibal Harris and lady on the back.

It was not intended, to take the fat little coon in the beginning, but he planked himself on the front seat, and nothing could budge him after that.

"Wha' fo' dat fat boy want' go fur?" demanded Ebenezer. "Dat mule got a heavy nuff load ter carry wifout dat little debbil."

"Ef dat boy wants ter go," said Fiddy, "he am gwine, an' yo' needn't say nuffin' 'bout it."

"It am too heaby a load wif dat boy in, I tol' youse," said Ebenezer.

"Den yo' bettah get out yo'se'f," said Fiddy.

"Reckon ef my own sistah's chile wants ter go long o' me he am gwine, an' don' yo' fo'get it, sah."

That settled it. Eben had nothing to say after that.

muttered Eben after they had started. "Dere am plenty ob room fo' him dere wifout crowding we uns."

Curry had decided objections to going on the back seat.

He could not see so well there to start with. Fiddy also objected to his being shifted about just because she wasn't going to give in after having once put her foot down.

"Let dat boy 'lone!" she remarked freezingly, "an' look aftah de waggin. Dat am wo'k nuff fo' yo' to do."

Once more that settled it. Away went the mule with his load of coons, and all was lovely.

The day was fine, the air was just right and the spirits of all were just overflowing.

Everything promised well, and no one dreamed of things going wrong.

The road wound through woods and by fields, up hill and down dale and there was plenty to see.

Five or six miles from home it crossed a railroad track.

When Ebenezer came to this place he looked up and down.

There was nothing in sight, and they drove on. When the wagon was right across the track a shriek was heard.

It came from an approaching train, still some distance away.

The instant the mule heard that sound he stopped.

"Gee up!" cried Ebenezer.

The mule wouldn't do it.

"G'up, I tol' yo'. What am de mattah?" cried Eben, picking up his whip.

The mule would not budge an inch.

Toot-toot-toot!

That was the engine.

"Wha' fo' yo' stop yer fo', yo' fool niggah?" asked Mrs. Crow. "G'long wif youse."

Whoo-oo-oo! toot-toot!

The engine now came in sight.

Ebenezer grabbed the whip and laid it on that mule's back for all he knew.

"G'up dere, yo' ole fool! Don' yo' see de kyars?"

"Yo' bettah get out an' pull him off de track, Ebenezer," suggested Mr. Harris.

Ebenezer thought otherwise.

"Get up, confoun' yo'skin!" he grunted, whacking away at the mule.

The latter laid his ears back and let out a wail, but he didn't budge all the same.

"Can't you make him go, you big fool?"

"Take a twiss in him tail."

"Put on mo' muscle, Eb'nezer."

"G'up dere, yo' lazy critter."

Toot-toot-toot!

The engineer saw the wagon on the track and signaled to it to get off.

That was just what Ebenezer most desired to do.

The mule did not understand this sort of business at all.

Moreover, he was not going to stir till he did.

The women were beginning to get alarmed by this time.

"What de mattah wif you, Eb'nezer Crow?" demanded Fiddy. "Does yo' wanter hab us all smashed up?"

"Heah, yo' Ham Harris, yo' jess get me out ob dis wagon dis bery minnit. Yo' spees I wanter be killed."

Toot-toot!

"Get out an' drag dat mule off'n de track, yo' Eb'nezer!"

"Hi-hil jess looker dem kyars. Dey smash us up fo' shuah. I'se gwine ter get out ob dis."

"Jess yo' stop whar yo' is. Eb'nezer, make dat mule go, ef yo' don' wanter be spoke to."

Toot-toot-toot!

Whack!

Whack!

Crack!

Biff!

Ebenezer was slashing away with the whip for dear life.

The end was in shreds and bits of it flew off at every crack.

The mule did not seem to mind it for a cent.

He had made up his mind to stay where he was, and no amount of lashing could make him change his purpose until he felt like it.

The women were yelling, Curry was beginning to cry, Hannibal Harris made several very warm remarks and Eben was thrashing at that mule's quarter deck with all his might.

When Eben wanted to exert himself he could do it and no mistake.

The way he banged away at that mule was a caution.

The mule did not budge for all the whacking, however.

All this time the train was coming on at full speed.

Something had to be done pretty sudden if anything were done.

The whip was worn to nothing, and the sweat was rolling off the big coon's head in bucketfuls.

"Dere amn't no use," growled Ebenezer. "Yo' gotter get out mighty sudden. I ain' gwine ter be smashed ter pieces jess on account ob dat mule's bein' so stubborn."

It was quite time to get out indeed.

The train was hardly a quarter mile away now and coming on licketty clip.

Out pilled those coons in hot haste any way they could get out.

Hannibal Harris dumped his lady out at the tail end of the wagon and then jumped.

Fiddy got out over the wheel and showed her striped stockings to the best advantage, to say nothing of her white skirts.

Curry gave a yell and a jump and landed on Hannibal's back just as he was getting up.

Ebenezer jumped out and gave the mule another whack with the butt of the whip.

"Dod rot yo' old skin, what yo' mean by dat?" muttered that mad coon.

By this time all hands had got out of the wagon and off the track.

The train was still coming on for all it was worth. The engineer opened the valve, and the old iron horse gave a snort that could be heard for miles.

Mr. Mule just then changed his mind about staying on the track.

CHAPTER X.

EBENEZER CROW, Miss Crow, Curry, the fat boy, Hannibal Harris, Esq., and lady, had all alighted safely from the two-seated wagon and got off the railroad track.

Then that mule, the very beggar that had caused all the ruction, bolted away, two-seated wagon, lunch basket and all, leaving the crowd behind.

The engine had given one tremendous blast, and that started him.

In another minute along came the train, the secondary cause of the trouble, and the coons stepped aside.

When it had passed by, there they were, all standing in a line by the track, looking for the mule.

He was observed going up a hill nearly half a mile away, at full speed, taking the vehicle, the lunch basket and the bottle of bait along with him.

The entire five opened their mouths in astonishment at the unexpected sight.

"Well! dat mule am as bad as dat Dicky boy fur contrariness," gasped Ebenezer.

"Golly! dere goes all de tings to eat!" exclaimed Curry, who always thought of his stomach before everything.

"I really b'lebe he done got away wif de bait," remarked Hannibal Harris, who was a fine old fisherman, as far as looking after bait was concerned.

"Fo' goodness sake, Hannibal Harris, hab we gotter walk all dat way back home agin wifout anyting to eat?"

"That was what the lady said, for she was no featherweight, and needed sustaining when she started out on a journey on foot.

Fiddy looked in disgust at the vanishing mule, and then at Ebenezer and sputtered:

"I declar' fo't, Eb'nezer, ef yo' ain' de bigges' fool niggah I eber see. Why didn' yo' hol' onter dat yer mule when yo' got out ob de waggin?"

"H'm! reckon yo' couldn' flnk ob two free dozen t'ings yo'se'f when dere am so much trubble flyin' roun' like dey was jus' den," was Eben's comment.

"No need to flnk ob two free dozen ob dem," snorted Assafidity. "De mule was de on'y flng yo' orter flnk about."

However, there was no use in jawing over the thing now.

The mule was gone, likewise the wagon, the lunch and the bottle of bait.

There was nothing for it but to walk back and make the best of a bad job.

"Wull, guess we bettah walk," muttered Eben.

"Dere amn't anyting else ter do, far's I kin see."

There was not, indeed, for by this time that obstinate old mule of Ebenezer's had disappeared over the top of the hill, and there they were, five or six miles from home, without any grub and no where to get it unless they did walk.

Ebenezer took the lead, and the rest struck on after him in single file.

None of them felt very much like joking or singing comic songs, you may be sure.

Eben stuck his big hands into his bigger pockets, and slouched along with his big hat pulled down over his eyes, looking glum enough to start a funeral.

Fiddy tagged on after him, very mad, but saying nothing, reserving what she had to say till she reached home.

The Honorable Hannibal Harris and lady followed, and Curry brought up the rear, waddling along like a duck, and laying the dust with his sweat as he rolled along.

That fat little coon was a good deal like Dick, he lived for fun.

He felt somewhat down in the mouth at first over the prospect of a long walk in the sun.

He soon got over that, however, and then he began to plot mischief.

Hannibal's lady was a few steps in front of him, moving her beetle crushers up and down with the regularity of churn dashers.

Suddenly that fat young imp thought of a good scheme.

"Hi, hi, Miss Harris, dere am a big bertle bug on yo' collar, waitin' to get a good snap at yo' ear!" he yelled, all of a sudden.

The lady gave a jump and a yell, waved madly in the air with her arms, and tumbled up against Harris, with the remark that she would faint. She knew she would.

Hannibal did not faint, but he nevertheless flopped over in the road, his flat nose stirring up the dust in great style.

The lady was considerable of a Jumbo, and when

she fell or sat down she did it with a good deal of force.

That's what she did this time, and Hannibal's nose would have been pressed out as flat as a flap-jack if there had been anything harder than dust to fall on.

Curry thought the whole thing just boss, and he shook with mirth, not at all suppressed.

He howled and chuckled and giggled and shook his fat sides until they resembled the sea in a storm.

"Yah-yah, look at dem fool niggahs," he chuckled. "Reckon dey sweep up ebery bit ob dut in de road, yah-yah!"

Miss Harris picked herself up after a bit and Hannibal followed as soon as possible, looking very much disgusted.

His black face was gray with the dust of the road, and looked funny enough to give a cat a fit.

"What fur yo' frow me down like o' dat?" he blustered. "Am' yo' got no sense?"

"I reckon if yo' got a big beetle bug nipin' at yo' ear yo' jump too," retorted the lady, "wifout much minding which away yo' was gwine."

Curry had gone ahead by this time, and his agency in the little episode was not discovered.

Ebenezer and Fiddy had gone right along, not bothering their heads about the troubles of the Honorable Hannibal Harris and lady, their own being all they cared to think about.

Having played his little snap on one pair of coons so successfully, that fat young rascal Curry thought that he might do the same thing for Ebenezer.

The same sort of racket would not work, of course, but there ought to be a lot more good ones if he would only think a little.

If Dick had been there, you would have seen lots of fun, but Curry was not so good at that sort of thing as Dick and so you could not expect as much.

However, that fat little coon managed to make things rather lively for Ebenezer for a short time.

First, he skipped to the side of the road and pulled up a long stalk of oats with a fine full head on it, all full of nice little sharp stickers.

Coming up behind Eben and Fiddy he tickled Mrs. Crow's neck with the same.

She struck out, to brush the supposed fly away, and took Ebenezer in the nose instead.

If she had aimed at Ebenezer's nose, she would have hit the back of her neck, for that's the way with women.

"Whoa dar! what yo' doin'?" howled the big ducky. "Wha' fo' yo' hit me like o' dat?"

"Fly got on mah neck an' I try fo' ter brush him away, dat's all."

Presently Curry tickled Eben on the ear with the head of oats and caused him to jump three feet.

Then he whisked around, and caught the little coon laughing at him.

"Confoun' yo', dat was yo' wha' done done dat yer funny bizness, was it?" growled Eben. "Yo' jess wait till I coteh you, an' if I don' wahm yo' hide fo' you I'se a liar."

Curry was not waiting to be caught, however, knowing what would ensue.

He jumped aside, ducked, doubled on himself, and then darted ahead, giving Eben the slip, and taking the road for home.

He kept several rods ahead of Ebenezer, in order to be on the safe side, and pretty soon he found a chance to work off a racket.

Passing a field where a gentleman bovine was quietly grazing, he proceeded to harass the same.

First he shied sticks and stones at Mr. Bull, and then he yanked out a red bandanna handkerchief and waved it wildly in air.

That did not suit the cow's husband for sixpence.

An Irishman and a bull both hate the sight of a red flag, and the bull rather the worse of the two.

This particular creature tossed his head, stamped his feet, and raised his voice in angry protest.

Curry continued to wave the socialist flag, and the bull charged at him.

Bang!

Down went a section of the fence.

The bull dashed into the road.

Curry dashed into the field, and made tracks in very lively fashion.

A closer acquaintance with that angry animal was not to be desired, and so he hooked it as fast as he was able.

Cutting into the road a quarter of a mile distant, he was in time to meet a man in a wagon going home, and he at once asked for and got a lift.

Meantime Ebenezer and Fiddy, as they came along, were suddenly astonished by the unexpected appearance of a very lively bull in the road before them.

"Shoo! get out o' dat!" cried Fiddy, waving her parasol at the brute.

The parasol was red, and that's enough said.

The bull had decided objections to red parasols or red anythings, and he said so.

On he came, head down and tail up, dust flying and nostrils streaming.

"Put down dat red ting, ye' natchel bo'n idjut," muttered Ebenezer. "Ain' yo' got any mo' sense dan dat?"

Then the big coon got between Fiddy and the bull, thinking to scare the latter off.

It couldn't be done that trip.

Fiddy got out of the way, but with Ebenezer it was different.

He soon discovered that there was no stopping the animal.

Then he turned tail and departed with considerable rapidity.

ha' got him head busted open. Yo' kean't scare me wif no bulls, son."

As Mr. Harris had seen the whole business he was not to be humbugged by any such fairy tales as this.

"Yas, yo'd do lots," he snorted. "Yo' was dead scared ob dat bull, yo' was, an' if yo' hadn't been so heaby, he'd ha' tessed yo' ober de fence in two seconds."

"Yo' am nuffin' but a big blowah," added Mrs. Harris, "an' eve'y time he goes out wif youse we get inter trubble."

There was defiance in the lady's tone and manner, but Ebenezer merely shrugged his shoulders and snorted.

"Wull, yo' lazy niggah, did yo' onhitch de mule?"

"Ob co'se I didn'. Does yo' 'spect I'se gwine fo' ter do yo' wo'k, yo' big lazy coon?"

Ebenezer was about to go for that saucy young coon, when Fiddy grabbed him by the arm.

"Yo' jess let dat boy 'lone," she sputtered. "Yo' orter be 'shamed ob yo'se'f. Wha' yo' spect dat lilly boy ter do? Ain't it 'nuff fo' him ter liff down dat heaby basket, wifout foolin' 'roun' de mule?"

"Huh! I reckon he make dat bastick light 'nuff ef yo' let him stay dere much longah," laughed Ebenezer. "G'way f'om dere, yo' fat little debbil."



When it had passed by, there they were, all standing in a line by the track, looking for the mule. He was observed going up a hill nearly half a mile away, at full speed, taking the vehicle, the lunch basket and the bottle of bait along with him.

The bull could run faster than he could, besides having on a good head of steam.

Before Mr. Crow had gone three steps the bull caught up with him.

It was no easy matter for a bull to toss that two hundred pound coon, but the bull attempted it all the same.

Ebenezer was not tossed up when the bull struck him, but his progress was considerably expedited all the same.

He was sent flying along the road and then sprawled out in the dust at a very undignified attitude.

Mr. Bull thought he had struck a stone wall when he collided with Ebenezer's broad stern.

He stopped, shook his head, let out a bellow, lowered his tail, gave a snort, whisked about and retreated to the field.

"Glory fo' goodness!" cried Ebenezer.

Fiddy hurried on in order to be safe, but Hannibal Harris, Esq., and lady now came up and inquired the wherefore of Ebenezer's thusness.

Our large colored friend got up, felt of himself, looked around and said:

"On'y dat I slipped dat time, dat yer bull would

"I ain't got no time ter argufy wif wimmen folkses. Life am too short."

"Don' yo' spoke to de lady like dat, Mistah Crow," said Hannibal. "I don't 'low no sech talk as dat to mah wife."

"Youse kin settle between yo'se'fs," said Ebenezer with a grunt as he proceeded to shake the dust from his head and garments. "I al'n' got no time to fool wif youse."

There was a coolness between the two couples after that, although the day was quite hot.

The Crows took the lead and the Harris family soon turned off upon another road.

When Eben reached home he found Curry sitting on the piazza in the shade, interviewing the big lunch basket and evidently enjoying himself.

The fat moke opened his eyes, swabbed off his forehead and asked:

"Whar yo' git dat bastick, yo' fat rascal?"

"Out ob de waggin, ob co'se," answered Curry.

"Whar yo' specks I git it?"

"An' yo' tote dat yer big bastick all de way home an' neber tol' us?" exclaimed Ebenezer in surprise.

"Done tote nuffin' 'tall," muttered Curry, annexing a sandwich. "De mule an' de waggin was in de shed, an' I he'p m'se'l."

Curry had to skip out then, for Fiddy wanted to get into that basket as well as himself.

Ebenezer took a seat on the piazza, wiped off the beads of sweat from his expansive forehead and remarked:

"Wull, ef dat don' beat all! Dat yer pesterin' mule he done fin' him way home by de oder road, and dere he am all cool an' comf'able while we uns was sweatin' ouah gizzards clean out trampin' froo de sun."

It was so indeed, and when Ebenezer went into the shed to unhitch the mule, the latter winked solemnly at him, cocked up his off ear and made some remark not plainly understood.

"Yas, you cock yo' eahs at me an' sa' suf-flin now," growled the coon, "but yo' won't splain wha' fo' yo' run away like o' dat an' leabe me fo' to walk fl' miles in de hot sun. I jess like ter lam-baste yo' in de eah, dat what I like ter do, yo' orn-ary crittah."

However, he did not whack the mule after all, concluding that an animal as smart as that would find some way of getting square if he did.

The best of the thing was that Eben could not blame Dick for his adventure, as that lively young gentleman knew nothing at all about it.

Dick found it out from Curry, however, and he gave Eben a good roasting over it that evening.

"How did you enjoy your picnic, Sneezzer?" he asked, innocently.

"Fuss-rate, Dicky, fuss-rate. Neber had sech a lubly time in all mah life."

"The grub held out, did it?"

"Yas'r, de grub hol' out splendid. We juss had all we wanted an' no mo'."

"Good ride, too, I suppose?"

"M-m! yo' jess bet we had a good ride. Neber see dat yer mule trabel so fas'. Reckon he was glad to get out."

"Didn't run away from you, eh?" asked that sly Dick.

"Run away f'om me? No, sah! Don't s'pose I kin hol' in dat mule? Co'se I kin, eve'y time run-in, sah."

"That'll do, Sneezzer," laughed Dick. "You're the biggest liar out of jail."

"Wha' fur yo' say dat?" asked Mr. Crow, opening his eyes.

"Oh, you know," chuckled the young scamp. "You can't fool yours truly with any such ghost stories."

"Ain't tellin' no ghos' stories, Dicky."

"Yes, you are. I know all about your little racket with the mule and the railroad train."

"How yo' foun' dat out?" asked Ebenezer, in great astonishment.

"Never you mind," chuckled Dick.

"H'm! dat fat little debbil tol' yo' all about it," sniffed Eben. "I wahm him trousers fo' dat when I cotech um."

"Yes, and if you do Assafidity will make it warm for you," remarked Dick as he strolled away.

Eben would have made it hot for Curry all the same, despite his wife's objections, but the little moon, profitting by past experience kept out of the way till the little affair had blown over.

The next morning as Dick was nosing about the place in search of something to occupy his mind, he concluded to work off a little snap on Ebenezer just to pass the time away.

He was not very long in thinking of a cake-taker in the way of snaps.

Having thought the thing up, the next event was was the carrying out of the scheme.

There was not much time wasted over that, you may be sure.

First our young gentleman procured a pair of rugged trousers from the professor's stock.

The great inventor had little time to waste in thinking of his wardrobe, and it frequently got very much the worse for wear before Mrs. Plunket had the opportunity to go through it and fix it up.

Having swiped the trousers, Dick filled the legs with hay, packing it well down so as to give a fine, plump appearance to the limbs.

After this Dick got a pair of misfit shoes, and fastened them to the bottoms of the trousers legs.

"There we are," he chuckled, with a grin which meant a great deal, "and now to business."

Sneaking around to a haystack in a field not far from the house, the young scamp shoved the pair of legs well up under the hay at the bottom thereof, leaving about half of them sticking out.

The next thing to do was to find Mr. Crow and set the ball rolling.

Eben was clearing up around the barn when Dick found him.

"Hallo, Sneezzer! Very busy?"

"Yas'r, I see bery busy dis mo'nin', sah."

"You're a fine watchman, aren't you, to let tramps go snoozing about?"

"No, sah, none ob dem tramps comes aroun' yer, I tol' yer."

"I know better."

"No, sah, dem tramps am d efly afeard ob me, Dicky, boy."

"Oh, go on! they're sleeping all over the place every night."

"Dat amn't so, I tol' yer," protested the coon. "Dem tramps gibs dish yer place de wides' kin' of a sweep."

"Yes, they do—in your mind. I know where there's one asleep at this very minute."

"A tramp sleeping on dis yer place?" asked Ebenezer, very much perplexed.

"Yes, sir."

"Whar am he?"

"See that haystack over there?"

"Yas'r."

"There's where he is."

"Ober dere by dat haystack?"

"Yes."

"Don't blebe it, sah. Yo' am foolin' me."

"All right, come over and see."

"Wha' fo' dat tramp sleep in de daytime, Dicky? Yo' am foolin' me."

"Come over and see if I am or not, you old duffer."

"Why didn't yo' woke him up, if yo' see um, boy?"

"Because I wanted you to see him."

"Huh, reckon dat tramp mus' be a new one wha' don' know me."

"Ah, go on; nobody's afraid of you."

"Yas, dey is, sah, yas dey is," muttered Ebenezer, shaking his head slowly from side to side.

"All right, then, come and give that snoozing tramp the razoo."

Ebenezer did not believe there was any tramp in it or he would not have gone along.

He did go, however, and Dick showed him the legs sticking out from under the haystack.

"There, what do you say to that, Sneezzer? You wouldn't believe me, would you?"

Ebenezer was very mad.

He must do something to show Dick that he was not afraid.

"De idee ob dat nassy loafah goin' ter sleep undah our nice haystacks!" he snorted.

"Pull him out, Sneezzer," said Dick, "and then give him the razzle-dazzle."

"Yo' bet yo' boots I do."

Ebenezer laid hold of those shoes, one in each hand, braced himself for a try and let himself loose.

CHAPTER XI.

EBENEZER meant business with that tramp under the haystack.

He laid hold of those protruding legs and yanked for all he was worth.

Well, well!

Out came the dummy legs from under the haystack and over went Ebenezer, all at once and nothing first, like the deacon's chaise when it went to pieces.

The first thing he knew he was standing on his head, the stuffed legs flying in the air like a kite.

Then he balanced on one ear, then on the other, then he gave a roll, and finally landed on his back.

Just about that time Dick took a walk.

When Ebenezer pulled himself together he looked around and saw a pair of legs lying on the ground at his feet.

"My sakes! I done pulled de man to pieces," he remarked.

Then he caught on to a lot of loose hay sticking out of the waist of the trousers.

That's the time he tumbled to Dick's little snap.

It was fortunate for the young gentleman that he took his walk just then.

If Ebenezer had got hold of him at that moment it would have gone hard with Master Dick.

"Huh! dat's some mo' ob dat bad boy's foolishness!" he muttered. "Jess let him wait till I cotech um, dat's all."

Having nothing else to take revenge on Ebenezer now began to take it out of the pair of dummy legs.

He literally kicked the stuffing out of them in his rage.

"Fool dis col'd ge'man like o' dat, will yer?" he muttered, hoisting the things up in the air with one kick.

Down they came again, and one of the misfit shoes took him on the bridge of the nose.

"Wow! wha' yer mean by dat?" he yelled, dancing about.

Then he grabbed those old breeches, one leg in each hand, and tore them apart.

"Dat what yo' get fo' dat," he muttered as he yanked one leg from the other and cast them from him.

Then he danced on the remains, taking a lively satisfaction in so doing, that being about the only way in which he could get hunk for the trick that had been played on him.

Master Dick would have caught a dandy trouncing if he had been around at that time.

It was not Dick's habit to get left, however, and he generally knew when it was time to skip out.

Having taken all the revenge out of those old breeches that was to be had, Mr. Crow walked back to the house, vowing vengeance upon Dick the next time that young fellow showed himself.

It is needless to say that Dick kept out of the way for a time.

Near the house he met Bertie Smith out for a walk, dressed in his best suit of clothes.

"Ah, there, Bertie, old man," said the young incorrigible; "how are they running just now?"

"How is what wunning, deah boy?" answered the slim.

"Brains! Pretty small crop, eh?"

"Aw, do people weally have bwains in Amew-ica?" asked the dude. "I didn't think you wequahed any beah, don't cher know."

"Not for government positions, dear boy, but you must have them if you want to take well with the girls."

"Aw, has yaw sistah any bwains, chappie?" remarked Bertie.

"Not many, or she wouldn't let you come to see her," thought Dick.

That was not what he said, though.

"Oh, yes, she's got a lot," he said, "and you want to lay in a stock."

"Do you mean to infaw that I am a hass?" asked the dude, beginning to tumble.

"Well, yes, a little bit that way," said Dick with a laugh. "You think so yourself, don't you, old man?"

"Yaw vewy wude," said Bertie loftily. "If it wasn't faw yaw sistah, I would nevah speak to you again, sah."

"You needn't let that stand in your way, old chap," remarked Dick. "I don't feel too awfully proud to have you speak to me as it is."

"Yaw a wude fellah," repeated Bertie, "and I won't speak to you any maw."

"I wouldn't," chuckled Dick, who just then saw T. Henry Jones, the other dude, turning in at the gate.

"You see that fellow there?" he asked. "He's going to cut you out with Rose."

"Aw, he cawn't do it, deah boy."

"He says you are no good, and if you don't challenge him, it's true."

"Challenge him!" gasped Bertie. "Do you mean fight a duel?"

"Certainly, that's what he means."

"The howid bwute! I shawn't do it!"

"All right; then he'll post you as a coward."

"But I don't want to fight, don't ye know," sighed Bertie.

"You must, old man, but I'll give you a tip."

"A tip, deah boy?"

"Yes, a tip. Jones is only bluffing."

"You don't say!"

"Yes, and if you put on a bold front he'll back right down. I'll go and see him and tell him that you'll fight, and when you meet he'll be sure to apologize."

"Aw, I thought he was no good, don't ye know," said Bertie loftily. "I was only phwetending to be afwaid of him."

"Oh, yes, of course," laughed Dick. "I understand that. Well, you go over there behind those trees, and I'll fix it up."

The dude went off, and Dick went to meet Mr. T. Henry Jones, who was now on the grounds.

"Hallo, Tommy," he said. "You saw me talking with Bertie Smith just now, didn't you, old man?"

"Aw, I nevah speak to the fellah," said the other dude.

"Well, he says you are trying to cut him out of my sister's affections, and that you must fight a duel with him."

Thomas Henry Jones was as much rattled over this announcement as the other dude had been.

Dick gave him the same taffy as he had given Bertie.

"I really fancy he is only trying to give you a steer, however," he said, "and I think you can make him back down if you keep a stiff upper lip."

"Do you weally think so?"

"Certainly. You've got to make a show of fighting, however, so as to make him back down."

"Then you weally think he is afwaid?" asked Thomas Henry, greatly relieved.

"Yes, certainly, and if you just put on a firm face he'll sneak."

"Aw, I'll do it, deah boy. When will the fight come off?"

"As soon as I can arrange it. He sent me over to see you."

"The howid bloodhawsty villain."

"Oh, don't you be afraid. Just go over to that clump of trees and wait for me."

"Where aw you going?"

"To get the pistols."

"Aw you going to load them yourself?"

"Yes."

"Then, if you weally love me, deah boy, just faw-get to put in any bullets, won't you?"

"All right, I'll fix it," and away went the young joker.

He got two pistols and loaded them plumb up to the muzzle.

You can be sure he didn't put in any bullets, but he was sure to have as much fun as though he had.

When all was ready he went out and found Thomas Henry and took him to where Bertie was waiting.

This was a pretty little glade in the woods where there was a level space, and where everything was just lovely for a duel.

A little brook went babbling over the pebbles not far away, the sunlight came flitting through the arching branches overhead, and everything was just too sweetly pretty for anything.

You've got to throw in some fine description of this sort, you know, when you've got a duel to tell about.

"I don't suppose you intend to apologize, do you?" asked Dick of Bertie.

"No, sah, nevah."

"And you?" he said to Jones.

"No, sah, I've nothing to apologize faw."

Oh, they were very brave, were those dudes.

Dick took Bertie aside and said:

"The pistols are only loaded with powder, but Jones doesn't know it. Fire point blank at him and you'll scare him to pieces."

"All wight, deah boy, thanks faw the stwaight tip, awfully."

Then Dick took Tom Henry Jones to one side and said:

"Smith is awfully afraid, and is trying to bluff it out. All you've got to do is to stand up and fire and he'll weaken."

"An' that's what I thought," replied that unblushing dude. "I nevah supposed he had any hawt, don't cher know."

"Now then, gentlemen, as neither of you will

The little joker, then handed the dudes their deadly weapons, took a handkerchief from his pocket and stepped aside.

"When I count 'one' you are to get in position, when I say 'two' you must raise your arm, and at the word 'three' you fire."

"If that fellah wishes to apologize it isn't too late," said Bertie.

"Nevah!" returned Jones, savagely.

Dick gave the word and dropped the handkerchief.

Bang, Bang!

The two reports were as one.

Both dudes fired slap bang right at each other.

"You're a couple of fools. What have you been fighting about?"

"You," said both slims.

"Who loaded the pistols?"

"Yaw bwothah Dick."

"Of course, and that makes you bigger fools. You ought to know him by this time."

The dudes got up and went away and did not speak again for a long time.

It was in the sweet, balmy season of the year when the bees go humming and the tramps are bumming, when the dairy-maids are sweating and the men their scythes are whetting, that young Dick Plunket got up another dandy racket on Ebenezer Crow.



Ebenezer looked as fierce as a painted savage in all the panoply of war just about then. Seated on the flour barrel, surrounded by all those munitions of war, he looked terrible enough to scare away any amount of burglars.

apologize," said Dick, "we must go on with this little business."

"Apologize! Nevah!"

Both dudes spoke as one.

"Very well, take your places. What do you say to twenty paces?"

"I won't fight fawthah than fifteen paces," said Bertie.

"Make it ten paces," spoke up Jones, who wasn't going to let that dude bluff him.

"I'm satisfied to have it five," said Bertie, doing the bluff act in his turn.

"Aw, make it one if you like," said Jones. "I shall teach you, sah, that you cawn't insult my honaw at yaw pleashah, sah."

"Better make it five, I think," said Dick. "Take your places, gentlemen."

He measured off five good strides, and each dude improved on it by stepping back a pace from the line marked out for him.

"Here are the weapons, gentlemen," said the young scamp of a second.

"Loaded with ball, I pwesume," asked Bertie.

"Chock up to the muzzle," answered Dick, with a wink to Jones.

"That's quite wight," remarked Thomas Henry, and Dick winked at Bertie.

Then both sat down on the grass with the dull thud you have heard about.

They were sights to behold.

Their faces were covered with blood, which trickled down upon their shirts.

That is to say it looked like blood.

Dick knew what it was, but he did not stop to explain matters.

He skipped out, for he heard a shriek and footsteps.

Rose rushed into the glade, having heard the two reports as she was out for a walk.

She saw the two dudes sitting there with their faces very red and with smoking pistols in their hands.

Then she screamed again.

Bertie took out his handkerchief and wiped his face.

The wipe was covered with red ink.

Those pistols had each contained a sausage case filled with red ink.

When they were fixed, the cases naturally went to pieces.

Jones wiped his face and discovered the brand.

Rose picked up the pistols, looked at the ink stains on the ground, and said:

He took Curry into his confidence, after first assuring young Fatsides that there would be no licking in this if Ebenezer found out the trick.

"It am all very well to wo'k snaps on dat big niggah," said Curry, "but if he took him shoe to yo' trousabs like he do me yo' wouldn't see whar de fun come in."

"That's all right, Curry," said Dick. "Ebenezer won't know who worked this snap on him."

"Wull, he know somebody do it, an' ef he can't get eben on no one else he take him revenge out o' me—dat's how it am, sah."

"Well, he won't do it this time, Curry, and it's the dandiest snap you ever saw. However, if you don't want to go in with me I can—"

"Yas, I does, 'deed I does," protested Curry, who didn't relish being left out.

"Oh, I thought maybe you didn't care about it," said Dick, carelessly. "I think I might work it alone if—"

"Wha's de use ob dat?" snorted the little coon, who was dying to know what the racket was.

"Didn't I say dat I was gwine ter help yo' on it?"

"Oh, you are, eh? All right then, come on."

Having got Curry into the thing, it was now only necessary to prime Ebenezer.

Dick went to the large coon in the afternoon and said:

"Say, Sneezer, are you afraid of burglars?"

"What's dat?" muttered the coon.

"I asked you if you were afraid of robbers."

"Ob co'se I isn't. Robber neber come to dish yer town."

"You're wrong there, Sneezer."

"I tol' yo' dey doesn't."

"But they will come. 'I've got a tip that burglars are going to attack this house to-night—are you afraid?'"

Ebenezer was afraid for a cold fact.

He wasn't the fellow to say so, however.

Instead of that he swelled out, pursed up his flat lips and remarked:

"Is I afraid ob dem buglahs? Well, does I look as ef I wor afraid?"

"No, I can't say that you do."

"Ob co'se I isn't. Jess lemme coteh dem robbahs tryin' to get inter dish yer ho'se. I gibs dem de razzle-dazzle fuss class, you see."

"That's all right. I had an idea that you would be afraid and was going to offer to sit up with you."

Ebenezer rejected this proposition with scorn.

"Git up wif me ter watch fo' de buglahs," he grunted. "Wha' foolishness am dat, Dicky? Don' yo' s'pose I'se a match fo' any ten buglahs wha' comes?"

"Well, I thought you might want some help, Sneezer."

"Go way, chile; go way wif yo' foolin'. I don' wan' no hellup, I tol' youse."

"Well, if that's so, I won't bother you, but you want to keep a good watch."

"G'long wif youse. Don' yo' tell me wha' I orter do. Guess I knows dat well as yo' kin tol' me, Dicky."

"All right. They're sure to come in by the kitchen door, Sneezer," said Dick, as a final tip.

"Don' ear' which a way dey comes in, Dicky. I'se ready fo' dem, I is."

Then Dick went away, satisfied that pipe was laid for a good snap.

When closing up time came Ebenezer was ready. He had said nothing to any one, but had made all his preparations.

There was a good big hall at the rear of the house, leading to the kitchen.

Here was where Ebenezer posted himself, in front of the door and under a hanging lamp.

In order that he might be perfectly comfortable, he had brought out a big flour barrel and stuck it in front of the door.

Upon this he he sat so as to be ready for the attack.

He had made plenty of preparations too, you bet.

First he had two big horse-pistols stuck in a belt girded about his capacious waist.

Besides these pistols, he had put three bowie-knives and two hatchets in that belt.

That was not all by a good deal.

Two big pistols stuck out of the top of each boot. Another projected from his hip-pocket on the right.

Besides these he had a gun slung over each shoulder, two razors stuck in his hat and a rifle resting on his knees.

There was not one of these fire-arms good for anything, but that did not matter.

The very moment that those bold robbers saw Mr. Crow they would be sure to run.

He was provided with other means of defense besides all these.

Ranged along the hall were two crowbars, three axes, a sledge hammer, four or five big clubs with warts on the big end, half dozen brooms, a shovel or two, a couple of hammers and a pair of tongs.

"How does I know how many of dem buglahs nought come 'long?" the faithful guardian asked himself. "It am allus de bes' way ter be prepared fo' de wust."

He was prepared, for a fact.

There were weapons enough to supply an army.

"Yo' don' coteh me snoozin' when buglahs is about," muttered Ebenezer. "I'se ready fo' dem eve'y time, I is."

He looked so, indeed.

If the burglars had only come along then!

What a reception they would have met with!

Ebenezer looked as fierce as a painted savage in all the panoply of war just about then.

Seated on the flour barrel, surrounded by all those munitions of war, he looked terrible enough to scare away any amount of burglars.

After awhile, however, waiting began to get very tedious.

Then Mr. Crow relieved the monotony by smoking a pipe.

After the pipe was out, he whiled away the moments by looking into a bottle which he had brought along.

The bottle could not last forever, or be consulted too often, and the pipe had to be taken up again, to kill time.

"Ef dem buglahs am comin', why don' dey come?" muttered Eben, impatiently. "I'se ready fo' dem, an' why de dickunes don' dey come?"

Perhaps he wouldn't feel so fine when the real burglars came.

He looked ferocious enough, surely, but just wait till something happened.

Yes, just you wait.

CHAPTER XII.

It did not look comfortable for burglars, the way Eben Crow sat on that barrel, waiting for them.

He was armed up to the muzzle and prepared for action.

However, after waiting for nearly two hours, and nobody putting in an appearance, the big coon fell asleep.

That was what Dick and Curry were waiting for. Ebenezer was just getting into a nice little doze, when he heard a groan.

At first he did not mind it, but then the sound was repeated.

This time it was more musty and blood-freezing than before.

"Goo! Lawd! wha' dat?" he muttered, suddenly waking up.

The sub-cellary, grave-yardy sound came again, and at the same time a cold hand was laid on the back of the coon's fat neck.

It was really a piece of ice held by the fat little coon.

Up jumped Ebenezer and opened his eyes as wide as port-holes.

"Oooh-oogh!" groaned some one.

The coon jumped two feet, for there, coming along the hall, was a figure all in white, holding up its hand.

"Wow! glory hallelujaram, sabe me!" yelled the coon, dropping on his fat knees.

At the same time another ghost glided around from behind and uttered a deep groan.

"De Lawd sabe me!" cried Eben, shaking with fear, as the two spooks stood in front of him.

The ghosts were Dick and the fat little nig, of course.

"Ebenezer, Ebenezer!" drawled out Dick, in a hollow voice.

"G'way f'om yer, g'way f'om yer!" muttered Eben, shaking like a shirt on a clothes-line with the wind blowing a gale.

"Ebenezer!" groaned Dick again.

"Dere amn't nobody by dat name heah, Mistah Ghost. G'way, please."

So waited Eben, clutching his fat hands and trembling.

"Ebenezer Crow, I know you! Come with me," said Dick, stretching out his hands.

"Oh, de Lawd sabe me! G'way, I tol' yer! I don' know yo' 'tall. G'way f'om yer!"

The poor coon shook till he made the window-panes rattle.

He never thought of his many weapons, and every time the ghosts groaned he shook in his boots.

"I want you!" cried Dick, putting out his hands. Curry did the same, although he said nothing.

Dick had warned him to keep his mouth shut under pain of having something rammed down it.

"Oh, deah—oh, deah, go 'way, please, Mistah Ghos', dat's a good feillah," moaned Eben. "I neber done nuffin' to youse. Don' yo' took me dis time an' I won' do it no mo'."

"Come with me, I want you," said Dick, putting his hand on the coon's head.

It was like ice, and the unhappy moke gave a yell and fell flat on his face.

His walking arsenal tumbled all over the floor, but he was too much rattled to notice it.

Young Curry began to laugh, and Dick gave him a kick in the rear.

The little coon had to get square on somebody, and so he kicked Ebenezer.

"Come with me!" howled Dick, giving Eben another raise.

Poor Eben was too much scared to do anything but groan and grunt.

"Get up!" groaned Dick again.

Ebenezer raised his head, and got on his knees.

"Bury him deep!" said Dick, in his deepest tones, as he put the barrel over Eben's head like an extinguisher.

Then he flirited his sheet at the light overhead, and it went out.

"Oh, de Lawd sabe us," cried Ebenezer, jumping up in terror.

Dick dusted and Eben struck out and caught Curry in the jaw, upsetting him in a jiffy.

That was too much for the patience or dignity of that fat lump of charcoal to stand.

"Ugh! Yo' stop o' dat, yo' big suckah," he groaned. "Why don' yo' hit a feillah ob yo' own size?"

Ebenezer knew that voice, and tumbled.

He threw the barrel off him, and it fell on top of Curry, just as the latter was getting up.

He was extinguished in a second.

"H'm! dey wasn' no ghostses 'tall," growled Eben. "Dat was on'y dat bad boy Dicky, an' dat mis'able young niggah Curry, tryin' fo' to fool me."

"Jess yo' wait till I coteh dem two jokahs. Ef I don' wahn deir jackets fo' dem, I wouldn' say so, confoun' deir hides."

Oh, Ebenezer was very brave, now that he had tumbled to the racket.

He struck a match in the way a woman never does, and in two shakes he had a light.

Curry was under the barrel, and concluded to stay there.

It was safer there than outside just at that time.

"H'm, I don' saw dem," muttered Eben, looking all around. "Reckon dey got away when de light wen' out."

Just before the match began to burn his fingers, he saw half of a sheet sticking from under the barrel.

He grabbed it and gave it a yank, and then had to drop the match.

Over went the barrel, and Curry was thrown out upon the floor.

He got out of his sheet, jumped to his feet and made a dash for freedom.

In the dash he did not know which way he was going.

He took Ebenezer squarely in the stomach with his bullet head.

It was at no half speed either, that he was going just then.

"Oh, de dibbel!" grunted Eben, suddenly dubbling up and then sitting down very solid.

Curry shot over him as he did so, caressing Eben's nose with his heels as he flew past.

Then he landed on the floor all spread out like a codfish, bumping his head against the wall in the bargain.

"Confoun' yo', wha' yo' doin' yo' ole stuff niggah?" he grunted.

"I show yo' what to do, ef I catch youse," grunted Eben, jumping up.

The darkness proved of use to Curry this time. Ebenezer went the wrong way, fell over the barrel, made a terrible racket and did not catch the little coon.

Curry felt his way along the wall and escaped.

Then along came Fiddy and Joanna, and, lastly, Dick, all with lights, and all wanting to know what all the noise was about.

"Fo' heaben's sake, Eb'nezer, what am all dis racket, about?" asked Fiddy.

"Dere was bu'glahs come inter de ho'se an' I'se had a big fight wif um," said that romancing coon.

"Burglars! Oh, glory!" shrieked Joanna, "we'll all be kilt."

"Neber yo' feah. Irish," muttered Eben. "Dem bu'glahs won' bodder yo' no mo'. I pa'lyzed seben or 'leben ob dem an' de res' done got frikened an' run away."

"Am dat so?" observed Fiddy. "How long yo' been waitin' fo' dem?"

"Bout fl' minutes. I heerd dem come in an' I jess sneaked down an' wen' fo' dem, hot footed, yo' bet."

"Phat's the sheet doin' down on the flure?" asked Miss Gilhooly.

"Dat's wha' one ob de bu'glahs weah ober him face so's I wouldn' know um."

"Yo' is a big story tellah, Eb'neza," said Mrs. Crow. "Yo' ain' been in bed fo' ober a hour an' a half. You'se been down to dewillage drinkin' gin, yo' has, an' dish yer story 'bout dem buglahs am all stuff."

"Hahn't been out ob de ho'se, 'deed I hasn't," protested Ebenezer. "I jess been watchin' heah fo' dem all dat time. Dicky, he tol' me dey was comin', and I got ready fo' um an' I done yanked it off."

"Dick Plunkett tould ye they wor comin', did he?" laughed Joanna. "Troth, thin there wor no burglars at all, av he tould ye so. Will yez niver l'arn sinse?"

"Dat boy been tellin' yo' ghos' stories, Eb'neza," said Fiddy.

"Ain' no ghosts 'bout it," muttered Ebenezer, beginning to tremble.

Dick was behind him now, and grabbing up the sheet from the floor, the young scamp threw it over his head, uttered a deep groan and said:

"Ebenezer Crow, your time has come! I want you!"

"Oh! de good Lawd!" cried Ebenezer, shaking from head to foot so that he could hardly stand.

"Don' took me now, Mistah Ghos', an' I'll be a good feillah all de time."

Fiddy had not seen Dick's little bit of business, and at the sight of him now she got rattled.

She gave a yell, dropped her candle and fled at full speed.

"Oho, yer big fool!" laughed Joanna. "Sure it's only Mather Dick cuttin' up his kedidoes."

"I got you that time, Sneezer," laughed Dick, throwing off the sheet and giving it a toss over

Eben's head. "You're a brave fellow to fight burglars, you are!"

Then Dick went away and the coon took a drop. "Knowed it was him all de time," he said with a grunt. "Him and dat young' imp, Curry, do all dis. Dere neber was any bu'glahs 'tall. Jess wait till I coteh um, an' somebody get deir trousahs dusted fo' dem, yo' see."

"Troth, nobody is afeared av ye," said Miss Gilhooly, elevating her nose. "Yez couldn't hurt a chippie burrud."

"Ain' got no time to was'e talkin' to yo', Irish," retorted Eben with fine scorn as he went away. "Yo' amn't wuff payin' no 'tention to 'tall."

"Begob, I'm too good for ye, anyhow!" sniffed

The crack on the head did not hurt him much, but he thought he was drowned for sure when all that water went over him.

Down on the floor he went, in spread eagle style, the sheet flying off and tripping him up.

"Lan' ob glory, Mis' Crow, wha' yo' doin' on?" he sputtered.

"Try ter scare me wif dat ole ghos' business, will yer?" demanded Fiddy.

"Neber did," declared Eben.

"Don' yo' try ter lie out ob it like dat, yo' mis'able fellah. I'se a good min' ter broke yo' haid fo' dat."

"Ain' lyin', nohow. Neber tried fo' ter scare yo' 'tall."

The first fellow to suffer was Curry, the fat little coon.

Dick met him on the lawn when he went out, and Curry remarked:

"Wasn' dat a bully joke we put up on dat nig-gah las' night, Mass Dick? He, he, I ain' got done laffin' 'bout dat yet."

"Yes, it was pretty good, but, I say, will you do me a favor?"

"What am it, Mass Dick?" asked that ball of ebony.

"Just take a letter for me. I'll run in and get it if you'll wait."

"Co'se I wait fo' yo'. Why wouldn' I, huh?"



"Wow! glory hallelujaram, sabe me!" yelled the coon, dropping on his fat knees. At the same time another ghost glided around from behind and uttered a deep groan. "De Lawd sabe me!" cried Eben, shaking with fear, as the two spooks stood in front of him.

Joanna. "Yez don't often have as good as the likes av me to talk to yez, so yez don't, ye big mouthed gawk!"

So saying Joanna went back to her downy couch, and all was serene once more.

When Ebenezer reached his own apartments he suddenly thought he would play roots on Assafid-ity to pay for the ones that had been played on him that night.

Throwing the sheet on his arm over his head he pushed open the door and slowly entered.

He didn't see why he couldn't groan as well as Dick, and he did for all he was worth.

Now Ebenezer was big and the sheet was not, and, moreover, he had put it on so that the longest end hung behind.

His head and shoulders were covered, but his big stomach was displayed in all its fine proportions.

"Oh, oh, oh!" he said, in very hollow, awfully awful tones.

Mrs. Crow was frightened for a second or two. Then she dropped to the deception and resolved to make it warm for that big fool coon.

She grabbed up a water pitcher and let him have it, contents and all, right on the cocoanut.

"Wha' yo' come in wif dat sheet ober yer haid fo' den, of yo' didn't?"

"Didn' hab it ober my head. It was, ober my arm, dat's all."

"Wha' fur yo' groan an' grunt, den?"

"Didn' do it. I mought ha' grunted, kase I'se got a misery in m' tummiick."

"I'll gib yo' a misery all ober ef yo' go fo' ter lie like o' dat ter me agin. Yo' was tryin' ter friken me, yo' knows yo' was, but it didn' wo'k fo' a cent."

Ebenezer was in hard luck.

He had been fooled and befuddled all around, and then, when he tried to fool somebody else it failed to work.

He picked himself up, shook off the water and went sadly to bed, thoroughly convinced of the uncertainty of human affairs.

The next time he tried to fool anybody, he would make quite sure beforehand that there were no water pitchers hanging around loose.

Dick had enjoyed this little racket, and was now quite ready for another.

He slept like a top, and arose as fresh as a daisy and in fine condition to play as many rackets on an unsuspecting public as it would stand.

Dick did not have his letter written, but that was all right.

He dashed it off in two shakes, put it in an envelope and gave it to Curry when he went out.

"There you are, take that to Mr. Wiel, the butcher, and wait for an answer."

"Ain' yo' gwine ter pay de postage on dat yer letter, Mass Dick?" asked Curry.

"Certainly, there's a nickel. Wiel will give you something else when you deliver the letter."

Wiel would give him something, you may be sure.

The letter was an old stock joke and Curry should not have been bitten by it.

When he came back half an hour afterwards he was very mad.

"De idee ob sending me on a errand like dat," he muttered.

"Like phwat?" asked Joanna, to whom he entered his complaint.

"Gibin' me a lettah to take, an' de lettah tell dat Dutchman to gib me a lickin'. Dat wha' Mars Dick do."

"Sure yez ought to know enough not to thrust that boy be this toime," said Joanna with a laugh.

That's all the consolation the little nig got out of her.

Fiddy didn't sympathize with him any more than Joanna, when Curry told Mrs. Crow about it.

"Yo' little fool, yo' orter know bettah dan to do anyting dat boy tol' yer," was her only comment.

The young nig had no chance to get hunk on Dick, for the latter was out of the town working up a snap.

That afternoon—it was nearly evening—Rose, Dick's sister, got a note written in a strange hand, which ran as follows:

"MY DEAR ROSE,—I have long loved you in secret, but must at last declare my passion. Fly with me to-night and be my own sweet duchess. I will have a carriage for you at the foot of the lane at ten, and will join you on the road. Be sure and not disappoint your most ardent admirer and faithful lover.

"DUKE DE BAUMGARTEN."

"A real live duke! Oh, ain't that splendid," cried the young lady, when she had read the letter.

It was written on heavy paper, with a crest at the top and all that, and was, of course, quite genuine.

Let any one stick a handle to his name, and Miss Rose was clean mashed at once.

"An elopement in high life," she snickered, reading the note again. "Isn't that just too sweet for anything? I never heard of anything so romantic. And with a real duke too. It's just too splendid."

Oh, she was just too utterly gone on a proposition of that sort, she was.

Young Dick, who had sent the note, was dead sure that she would bite, and he was quite correct.

He knew the next time he saw her, after she had got the epistle, that it was all right.

At supper she scarcely ate anything, and was constantly thinking of something else when asked common every-day questions.

"She'll go all right," chuckled Dick to himself, "and now to get somebody for the Duke de Baumgarten. That won't be hard to fix."

It was not, for a fact.

The young imp decided to take the professor, but not to let that absent-minded gentleman know where he was going, nor to let Rose know who her companion was until the right moment.

He hired a closed carriage in the village, got a man he could trust to drive it, and had it at the bottom of the lane at ten o'clock, as per agreement.

Shortly before that time he discovered that Rose had skipped.

He went at once to the study of Professor Dinglebus, and found that erratic gentleman working over some of his inventions.

"I say, Uncle, you're wanted; man has dislocated his brains and needs looking after at once. You're the only man that can save him."

"H'm! hal' yes, very strange case," muttered the great Dinglebus. "Use some of my new discovery; I know it will work."

"Well, you mustn't lose any time," said Dick. "Come on, here's your hat. You'd better bundle up, too, for it's a cold night. You'll find a carriage waiting for you down the road a bit. I had it stand there so as not to excite ma."

Then Dick hustled the professor out, wearing a big wide awake hat to start it, and muffled in a huge scarf to conclude.

The great man was somewhat near-sighted, very much so, in fact, and he had mislaid his glasses, so that when he reached the road all he could make out was a carriage drawn by two horses.

The sidelights were not going and the shades were drawn down as well.

Dick bundled him into the carriage, which immediately drove off at a gallop, nearly upsetting the great Dinglebus.

Then to the utter amazement of the professor he suddenly perceived that he was not alone in the carriage.

A lady, closely veiled, sat on the opposite seat.

"H'm, ah, yes, probably the wife of the patient, poor thing," he muttered. "How she must suffer."

"That's him, my own dear splendid duke," remarked Rose. "I wonder why he don't say something?"

Nobody could have heard him if he had with the carriage going like mad, and the wheels making so much noise.

Rose had to hold on to the strap to keep from being pitched headlong into the duke's lap, and that occupied all her time without her trying to talk.

Finally, however, she thought it was time to say something.

It was awfully spooky, sitting there and saying nothing, especially when her companion was a real duke.

"Ahem!" she said, at last.

The professor thought he heard something and looked up.

"Ahem!" repeated Rose, much louder than before.

"Beg pardon, what did you say, ma'm?" asked the professor, half rising.

Then his head bumped against the top of the carriage, and he sat down again very unceremoniously.

He made a remark which may have been very learned, but was hardly suitable for ears polite.

"Yes, that's what I think, my dear duke," said Rose.

She hadn't caught what was said, but thought she ought to make some reply.

"Who's a poor duke, ma'm?" asked the professor. "I don't understand."

Bang!

The carriage struck a thank-you-ma'm.

Bump!

Then it jumped over a big stone.

Thump!

Then it hit something else.

Rose was tossed over upon the lap of the great Dinglebus and she grabbed at his muffler to hold on.

The professor had his wind nearly knocked out of him by the operation.

"Ugh, confound it all!" he gasped, making a grab at Rose to save her being jostled to the floor. Something very funny was about to happen.

I'll let you know what it was by the next steamer.

CHAPTER XIII.

THAT was a fine old elopement.

The professor thought he was going to perform an operation for a patient.

Rose imagined she was eloping with a foreign duke.

The coach was bumping and tumbling about, and Rose was suddenly deposited in the lap of the professor.

She made a clutch at the big muffler around his neck.

At the same time he made a grab at Rose's thick veil.

Then the coach suddenly stopped, the door was thrown open, and a flood of light from a bull's-eye lantern poured in.

The professor lost his muffler, and Rose had her veil torn off.

"Why, uncle?"

"Bless me, if it isn't Rose!"

"Sakes alibe, what am all dis?"

That was Ebenezer.

Dick had told him that the carriage contained burglars, and that he must stop it.

The driver, after going all around, had returned to the spot where he started.

Ebenezer thought he had stopped the hack, but the driver had stopped of his own volition.

Dick had posted him, and he knew his cue first-rate.

Ebenezer threw open the door of the hack, expecting to find something very mysterious.

All he saw was the professor and Rose very much mystified.

"Why, uncle!"

"Bless me, it's Rose!"

"Mah goodness! wha' dat mean?"

Dick did not show up, but Rose knew that she had been fooled all the same.

"Drive straight back to the house," she said to Ebenezer.

"Heah we is a'ready," said the coon.

Rose looked around, saw where she was, bounced out of the carriage and dusted for the house as quick as sent.

"H'm! Dat am bery funny," muttered Eben.

"How did Miss Rosy an' de 'fessah get in de ca'rage? I didn' see dem leabe de ho'se."

"What did you say, Mr. Crow?" asked the professor, absent minded.

He had forgotten all about his patient and of his own great medical discovery.

"Am yo' gwine in de ho'se?" asked Eben, not knowing what else to say.

"Oh, yes, to be sure—ah, yes—exactly—quite so—I think I'd better," murmured the preoccupied great man, and out he got.

He also went inside, and then the hack drove away.

"Wall, sabe my life if I kin undahstand dat," muttered Eben. "Wha' to' dey go out ridin', an' den run away f'om each oder like dat. Kean't make dat out nohow."

Neither could Rose make out how the professor came to be in the carriage when she expected to find a foreign count there.

She finally hit upon the explanation of the affair.

That horrid Dick has been at his tricks again," she suddenly exclaimed. "I do wish that mama had left him in Europe. I'd like to lose him in the Roman catacombs; that's just what I'd like to do."

Dick wasn't the sort of fellow to let himself be lost anywhere, however, when there was fun to be had.

There was plenty of it lying about loose just now, ready for him to pick up whenever he felt like it.

A day or so after the racket on the professor,

Master Dick picked up a large and fine nugget of mirth, and proceeded to work it to its full value.

Johnny Gilfeather, Joanna's mash, came around early one evening just at dusk to see Miss Gilhooly and take her out for a drive.

He had hired a horse and buggy at a livery stable in town, and had on his shiniest Patrick's day hat, and his biggest green necktie, in order to do honor to the occasion.

Dick saw him when he drove up, and at once resolved to have some sport with him.

"Hallo, Turk!" said the unabashed young gentleman. "Come to take your girl out for a ride, have you?"

"Niver yez moind phat I've come for," said Johnny, whose brogue was as thick as a London fog.

"It's lucky you came when you did," went on Dick, "or you might have missed her."

"Sure she knew I wor coming," muttered Mr. Gilfeather.

"Maybe so, but if the Italian had arrived first I think you would have been left."

"Phat Italian?" asked Johnny, the green-goggled monster of jealousy beginning to chew at his insides.

"Oh, the regular Italian, of course, the one that comes every night."

"Phat's that?" and Johnny jumped clean off the seat.

"Didn't you hear what I said?" asked that cool Dick.

"Do yez mean to say that a dirty Italian comes to see Joanna ivery night?" gasped Mr. Gilfeather, in a passion.

"Well, you needn't blow me up for it," said Dick.

"It isn't my fault."

"Phat's the sucker's name, begob?"

"Oh, I say, come now," laughed Dick, "you must not expect me to even remember an Italian's name much less speak it. Life is too short for that, Johnny, my boy."

"Begob, I'll have an explanation!" hissed Mr. Gilfeather, rushing into the house.

"And I'll have some fun," chuckled Dick, hurrying to the barn.

Well, Mr. Gilfeather wanted satisfaction right on the spot.

"Phat does yez mean be goin' out wid an Italian, Joanna, whin yez knows we hov been keepin' shteady compny for tree years an' more, too, begob?" he began.

"Who has been eout wid an Italian?" asked Joanna. "I wudn't wipe me feet on wan av thim, so I wudn't, and yez knows it very well, Johnny."

"Yez wor goin' out wid wan to-night av I hadn't come foirst."

"Oho, hol phwat a shtory!" warbled Joanna.

"Wud yez hark at the mon whoiver tould yez such a fairy shtory as that?"

"Yez have yer things on already so yez cud skip out the very minyute he came."

"Go an, ye jealous feller, there's no Italian or annybody else but ye that comes to see me," said Joanna.

"Sure, I h'ard this very night that there wor an Italian comin' to see yez reg'lar."

"Who tould ye that?" asked Miss Gilhooly, with pardonable curiosity.

"The bye in the house."

"Masther Dick, do ye mean?"

"Yis."

"Oho-ho-ho! but it's a fine gilly ye are!" laughed Joanna. "Faix, don't ye know better than to believe the stories that bye tells yez? Sure, he wor making game av ye, so he wur."

Mr. Gilfeather scratched his head and raked up an idea or two.

"Faix, that's so," he mused. "Sure, I knowed he wor the devil's own bye for playin' thricks an' for all that I had to go and believe ivery worrud he said."

"Well, av yez are ready I am," said Joanna.

"Sure I had me hat and cloak an, all ready to start the very minute ye came, so as to lose no toime, and thin yez have to go and believe a fairy story that Masther Dick do be tellin' yez and lose more time than it'll take us to go all over the town, but that's the way wid ye min; yez get so turrible jealous and yez haven't any more sinse—"

"Hould an, hould an!" cried Mr. Gilfeather.

"Faix, yez must be wound up, and av yez kape an till yez rin down, it's no ride ye'll get to-night, unless yez want to keep it up in the car'ge."

Joanna took the hint thus delicately expressed and put on the stopper.

She went out to the buggy and Johnny Gilfeather helped her in, and then climbed in himself and took up the lines.

"Get up," he grunted, giving the reins a slap on the horse's back.

The nag started and then stopped.

There seemed to be some difficulty in the way of further progress, in fact.

"Get up!" cried Johnny, giving him another slap with the reins.

Once more the nag attempted to move, but the buggy seemed to hold him back.

"Phat's the matter wid yer?" said Johnny, giving the poor nag a belt.

The horse jumped, and the buggy went ahead a bit and then stopped.

Then Joanna began to laugh.

She did not laugh mildly, either.

There was more hilarity to the square inch in that laugh than you could find in two circuses.

"Phat are yez laughing at, Joanna?" asked Mr. Gilfeather.

"At ye," cried Joanna, pausing for an instant to take breath.

"I haven't?"

"No." How do yez suppose the horse can go an' wid that big lump av iron dhragging at his mout' all the time?"

Johnny looked under the seat and saw the iron weight to which the hitching strap is fastened resting peacefully at his feet.

"Yez air very funny," he said, scornfully, "but there's the lump av iron at the bottom av the ear'ge."

Joanna looked and saw that Gilly had told the truth for once. Then she wondered what she had been laughing at.

"Yah, yah! how soon yo' spect ter slah?" giggled Curry. "Recken yo' get 'bout as fur as the woodshed by to-morrer mo'nin'. Dat am jess like a Irishman."

Once more Curry indulged in hilarious mirth, the echoes of his laughter being heard far off among the hills.

Joanna suspected that the little coon knew why they couldn't make any better time.

"Here, here, stop yer laffin' ye young monkey," she said, hastily, "and tell us phat's the matter."

Curry only laughed the harder at that.

"Ob, my! jess ter flink ob dem Irishmans," he chuckled. "Dey don' know no mo' dan a yaller



Eben got to the door, but the boys continued to beckon him on and to indulge in mysterious whispers. "'Clar' for goodness, I b'lebe suffin am gwine ter happen aifah all," muttered Eben. He was quite right. Something was going to happen.

"Phat for?" asked Johnny, turning an inquiring glance on Miss Gilhooly.

"Because yez haven't, ho—ho—ho—ha—ha—ha!" and the lady went off in a fit of laughter.

"Becos I haven't phat?" asked Johnny.

Joanna could not answer immediately.

She had to have her laugh out, or she would have tumbled from the buggy.

"Stop yer laughin' an' tell me phat's the raison av it?"

"Oho—ho—ho—but I shall die! Oh, murder! did yez iver see the loikes av that?"

Then the lady had another laughing spell, and nearly choked.

Mr. Gilfeather began to get on his ear about this time.

"Begob, av it's so very tunny," he grumbled, "I don't see phy yez can't let me know phat it is an' not go splitting yerself all alone."

Joanna was fairly crying, she was so overcome.

"Sure, yez haven't, oho—ho—ho, ha—ha!" and away she went again.

"I haven't phat?" asked Mr. Gilfeather, with a good deal of spunk.

The tone sobered Joanna down a bit.

"Yez haven't taken in yer hitching iron, that's phat!" she sputtered.

"Go an!" sputtered M. Gilfeather, giving his old plug another crack.

The same thing happened that had happened before.

The wheels seemed disinclined to go around.

Just then another volley of laughter was heard.

It did not proceed from the ruby lips of Miss Gilhooly, however.

No, the mouth that gave vent to those silvery sounds had several pounds more of beefsteak on it than Joanna's could boast of.

Young Master Currycomb was the party who was getting off that laugh.

"Yah-yah-yah! jess looker dem Irishers," he chuckled. "Dey jess donno nuffin', dey don', yah-yah!"

"Phat's the matter wid ye?" demanded Gilly angrily.

"Wull, wull, ef dat amp't de wust!" and Curry laughed more explosively than Joanna had done.

"Shut up, yer black imp!" cried Mr. Gilfeather, cracking his whip at the little coon.

"Hah! yo' can't hit nuffin'! Irish red head, Irish no good, yah!"

Gilly cracked his whip again and the poor nag gave a jump.

The buggy got a shaking up but that was all.

dog an' I flink I'd rudder hab the dog ef I had ter fin' out anything."

Then that fat little lump of charcoal shook with mirth, by no means suppressed, and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

In vain did Joanna ask him what the trouble was, for he only laughed.

She thought she had discovered the secret when her own laughing fit was on, but she had not.

The fat little nig was in the swim, however, as far as appearances went, and knew all about it.

Joanna could not coax the explanation out of him, however, for he only laughed and chuckled, and shook the more he was questioned.

"Yah, yah, dat am jess like a Irishman," he finally howled. "How yo' spect yo' am gwine fo' to go anywhar wif de wheels done tied fas' to-gedder?"

Joanna looked over the side of the buggy.

It was growing dark, and yet it was still light enough for her to see where the trouble lay.

That young scamp, Dick Plunket, had fastened the two wheels on one side together with a strong rope.

The other two wheels, those on the opposite side, would go, but the tied ones would not.

That was why the buggy would not go ahead when Gilly belted his poor old horse.

The side on which the wheels were shackled, was opposite to the one where Joanna and Gilly had entered the buggy.

That was why they had not seen the cause of all the fun.

Besides that it was dusk and that also was in the way of their making any discoveries.

Then along came Curry, and, seeing that something was up he went up and saw what the trouble was.

You can bet your boots that he laughed some when he saw what had happened.

He knew that Dick had put up the little snap, for there wasn't anybody else around there clever enough to have done it.

When Johnny Gilfeather saw what was the matter he was greatly incensed.

Down he jumped, whipped out a big jack-knife and made a slash at the rope.

He missed it and cut a gash in his new trousers, barely missing gouging out a section of hide as well.

"Begob, av I catch the bye phat done that, I'll massacre him alive, so I will," he muttered.

That tickled Curry immensely.

"H'm! uf yo' tink yo' kin get ahead of Mass Dick, yo' am mistookin'," he warbled.

"Faith, I am not," said Johnny, cutting the rope and making oakum of it.

Then he got in again and drove off, followed by the jeering laughter of Master Currycomb.

"Hol no good, Irish, red-head, co'n-beef an' cabbage, yah-yah, big fool Irishman!" yelled that undaunted young coon.

"Begorrah, there'll be wan less nagur in Mrs. Crow's family av I get after that young imp," remarked Joanna, and as for Dick she would scarcely speak to him for a week after that.

About now Ebenezer went off on a visit with Fiddy, starting over night, and not returning till late the next afternoon.

Young Curry was left at home, as neither Ebenezer nor Assafidity cared to be bothered with him.

"Mean ole tings!" sputtered the little nig as the wagon drove away, "dey mought ha' taken me jess as well as not."

"Yes, it's a shame," said Dick.

"Dat's jess what it am. You am right, Mars Dick. It am jess a bu'nin' shame; but I git eben wif dem niggahs, I do."

"That's right—you ought to pay Sneezer off for leaving you behind."

"Bet yo' life I do dat," muttered Curry.

Dick didn't say anything just then, but in the morning he had his plans all laid.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, Curry," he said, "if you'll help me."

"Does yo' mean fo' to get squah on dat big niggah?" asked Curry, eagerly.

"Yes."

"'Couse I he'p youse. Don' I wanta fix um fo' not tookin' me wif um?"

"All right. You get a spade or a shovel and come along."

"Wha' fo' yo' wan' a spade or a shobel fo', Mars Dick?" asked Curry.

That sort of business looked too much like work to suit his royal darkness. He was not averse to playing rackets, but he did not want to have to work too hard to achieve his object.

"Why, we've got to dig a hole for Ebenezer to fall into," said Dick.

"My golly! How long yo' flnk it took yo' to do dat?" gasped Curry. "Yo' gotter 'membah how big dat niggah am, Mars Dick. It took yo' a monf ter make a hole big 'nuff ter hol' dat fellah."

"Oh, no, I think not," said Dick, "and, besides, think of the fun we'll have."

"M-m! I jess like ter see dat ole stuff go flop down in de hole, kerwallop!" chuckled the little coon, his eyes glistening and his teeth shining.

"All right then," said Dick, "but you've got to help me dig the hole."

Curry thought a few minutes and then said, in the tone of a fellow who has discovered a great thing:

"I tell yo' how we do dat, Mars Dick, an' we don' hab ter do so much wo'k nudder."

"Well, how is that, young Ebony?" asked our little joker who was just as willing to get out of hard work as Curry was, although he did not say so much about it.

"Why, sah, didn' yo' know dat dey was a ole well on de place, jiss a leetle bit ob a way f'om de ho'se, dat a man go fo' ter dig an' den he gub it up?"

"An old well, eh?"

"M-m, dat's de ting. I kin show yo' de place—Dere ain't no watah in um, 'cause de man didn' dig fur 'nuff."

"Well, that'll suit us. Show me where it is, young Charcoal."

Curry soon took Dick to the place which, as he had said, would do first rate.

A hole had been dug and then partly filled in, the earth being easy to dig up again.

The two jokers got to work and, under Dick's supervision, the earth was tumbled out till there was a hole about ten feet deep and about three across, just big enough to take in Ebenezer very comfortably.

When the hole was dug Dick carted away the loose earth in a wheelbarrow, and put it out of sight.

It would not do to have Ebenezer see it for a good many reasons.

After that he and Curry covered the hole with a few long, thin sticks, and threw a lot of grass over the whole business.

If a fellow went nosing around, he would probably discover the thing, but not otherwise.

Dick had an idea that Ebenezer would not do very much nosing, and he took his chances.

The big coon did not get there until nearly dark, and then Dick went to him, when he was alone, and said:

"You ought not to have gone off to-day, Sneezer, and you may be sorry for it."

"Wha' dat yo' say, Dicky?" asked Eben, his eyes opening very wide.

"I say you ought not to have gone away."

"Wha' dat fo', h'm?"

"Because something is going to happen."

"Wull, I spees dey is. Suffin' gen'ally do happen."

"Yes, but this is very bad."

"What am it?" asked Eben, getting excited.

"I don't know, but you'll see."

"G'way wif youse," said Eben, scornfully.

"Does yo' flnk yo' kin get me rattled wif dem fairy stories?"

"It isn't a fairy story, Sneezer, and something is going to happen."

"Wall, what am it? Kean't yo' tell me, 'stead ob bein' so very sterious?"

"No, I can't tell you, but I know something strange is going to happen. I can't exactly explain, don't you know, but I seem to feel, you must understand, that something will happen to-night, you know."

Ebenezer was very much impressed with the mystery.

"Wha' yo' 'spect it am, Dicky?" he asked. "Does yo' tink it am bugglahs or robbahs or de ho'se cotechin' on fiah or suffin' like dat?"

"I can't tell what it is, but you'll see," said Dick.

"H'm! did yo' heah anybody talkin' 'bout it, Dicky?" asked Eben, more and more impressed with the idea that something was up.

"Yes, I did, but I couldn't tell you what they said, Sneezer. All I know is that something is going to happen."

"H'm! yo' didn' heah dem say dey was goin' fo' to bu'n de ho'se?"

"No, not that."

"Maybe dey was gwine fo' to rob it den?"

"No, I don't think so."

"Den wha' de dooce does dey wan' ter do, does yo' 'spect?" asked Eben, more puzzled than ever.

"I can't tell you, Sneezer, but I know that something is going to happen. Sh!"

The big coon jumped as Dick uttered this caution in a sharp tone.

"Wha' de mattah?" he asked.

"Sh!" said Dick, again putting his hand alongside his mouth.

"What am dat fo'?"

"They may be listening even now. Sh!"

Ebenezer did not like that sort of business.

It scared him much more than Dick's mysterious words did.

"Does yo' flnk so?" he asked.

"Yes. Sh! Something is going to happen. Keep your eyes open. Sh!"

Then away went that young rascal, leaving Ebenezer in a very puzzled condition.

"H'm! don' blebe dey am anyfing gwine ter happen 'tall," he finally muttered. "Dat boy jess try fo' ter fool me, dat am all."

Later on, when it was quite dark outside, and Eben was sitting in the kitchen alone, the door was suddenly opened.

There stood Dick and Curry, looking very mysterious and beckoning to him.

"Sh! this way; now's your time. Sh!" said Dick.

Then he and Curry moved away as he arose, but they still beckoned.

"What am de mattah?" asked the coon.

"Sh!" said Dick, still beckoning.

Eben got to the door but the boys continued to beckon him on and to indulge in mysterious whispers.

"'Clar' fo' goodness, I blebe suffin am gwine ter happen aftah all," muttered Eben.

He was quite right.

Something was going to happen.

CHAPTER XIV.

SOMETHING happened to Ebenezer.

I told you that something would happen and Dick told Ebenezer the same.

That deluded coon followed those two boys outside, led on by their mysterious whispering.

"This way," said Dick. "Sh! don't make any noise."

"Here dey am! Sh!" said Curry.

Then the boys suddenly darted ahead, as if in chase of some one.

Ebenezer was not going to let it be said that Dick and the little coon did all that was done.

He gave a grunt and dashed after those boys helter skelter.

Now, those boys knew where they were going. Dick jumped over the pit-fall prepared for Mr. Crow and Curry ran around it.

"Sh!" hissed Dick as he made the leap.

After him came Eben, on the qui vive, which means the keen jump.

Crack!

There was a smashing sound and then a surprised grunt.

Then came a dull thud, such as you have often read about in "Ed's" novel, and another grunt.

Ebenezer had fallen plump to the bottom of the hole like McGinty of ancient history.

Then Dick suddenly appeared with a lantern in his hand.

The light had been hidden under a bush, and Dick had brought it out after the fall of Ebenezer the great.

"Why, hullo, how's this?" exclaimed the young scamp. "Where are you, Eben?"

Dick then advanced a few paces and held up the light.

Curry was a few feet away, and both stood on the brink of a yawning chasm.

As for Mr. Crow, he had totally evaporated, as it were, so to speak, that is to say.

Dick and Curry looked into the hole as though greatly astounded to find it there.

Ebenezer was at the bottom, and not even one lock of his kinky wool showed above ground.

"Hallo, Sneezer!" roared Dick, as though Eben were miles away, instead of just under his feet.

"Where have you got to?"

Ebenezer had by that time recovered his breath.

"Heah I is, Dicky!" he muttered, in a smothered tone. "Reckon dere hab been a yarthquake or suffin' like o' dat."

Dick looked down the hole and Curry followed suit.

He looked and he looked and he held up the light.

"It's very strange," he declared. "Can you see anything of him, Curry?"

"No, sah, I done see nuffin'."

That was true enough, for the young imp had his eyes closed just then.

"Call again, Sneezer," cried Dick. "I don't seem to see you."

There was a very good reason why the young fellow did not see Eben.

He was not looking where the coon was, that's all.

"Heah I is, Dicky," cried Ebenezer, "down yer in de groun'. I 'spect suffin' hab happen, aftah all."

"Where did you say you were, Sañezer?" asked Dick, very innocent.

"Bight down yer, I tol' yer," snapped Ebenezer.

"Reckon yo' is jess ober mah haid, ef I kin tell anyfing by de sound ob yo' woice."

Then Ebenezer tried to climb out of the hole.

He only succeeded in tumbling a lot of loose earth down on his head.

"Whoa, dar! yo' stop o' dat!" he howled.

Then he sneezed.

Ebenezer's sneezes were not to be sneezed at, for he was as good at that sort of thing as at laughing.

That sneeze sounded as if a cannon had gone off close at hand.

It shook Ebenezer, the sneezer, and he shook down some more earth.

Of course there was more sneezing business after that.

"Halloo! I really believe he is down here," said Dicky, greatly surprised.

You would have supposed he had only just that moment found it out.

"Ob co'se I is!" growled Ebenezer, trying to get out.

The hole was a little too tight a fit for that, however.

Then Eben began to scold and to take on at a great rate.

"Wha' fo' yo' wan' ter tol' me dat suffin' wae gwine ter happen, yo' bad, mis'able boy?" he sputtered.

"Hallo! that is you down there, is it?" was Dick's reply.

As for Curry, he was wise enough to hold his tongue.

"Yes, ob co'se it's me. Who yo' s'pose it am?"

"Well, what's happened, anyhow?"

"Sumpin' allus do happen when yo' say dey

will," growled Eben, "an' I jess wish yo' keep yo' mouf shet, yo' good-fo'-nuffin' fellah."

"Why, you ought to set me down as a prophet, Sneezer, if that is the case," said the little scamp.

"Huh! reckon yo' am no profit to nobody," grunted Eben. "Precious little profit yo' am. Mo' likely it am loss an' plenty ob it."

At this point Assafidity came out, hearing something going on.

"Whar am Eb'nezer?" she asked.

"H'm! down in de hole!" giggled Curry. "He step so bery hahd de yarth jess gib way wif um."

"Take care, or you'll go down too," yelled out Dick. "Can't you see where you're going?"

Dick remained silent, however, and Ebenezer had to yell again.

"Hallo, Dicky boy, whar am yo'? Yo' wouldn' leabe po' Eb'nezer ter starbe ter deff in dis yer hole, would yer?"

There was no reply and Ebenezer got mad.

"Mis'able, no 'count fellah!" he growled, "I jess lambaster him jaw fo' he when I done cotch um. Neber see sech a mean boy as dat. Wondah I eber was fool 'nuff ter hab anyfing ter do wif sech trash."

Dick heard all the grumbling, and there was more of the same sort, but he never said a word.

"Ef dat boy wor mine," muttered Ebenezer,

"Hol' up, hol' up, dere, don' go 'way!" yelled Sneezer, thinking Dick had started.

Circumstances sometimes alter one's feelings, and Ebenezer switched around very lively just then.

Dick with a ladder and Dick without a ladder or other assistance, were two different persons.

That coon had no use for the empty handed Dick, but Dick with a ladder was a first-rate fellow.

"What do you say?" asked Dick.

"I sayed yo' was a good fellah, Dicky, an' I was on'y foolin' dat time. Co'se I hab suffin ter do wif



"Hi dar, yo jess g'way f'om dat yer hole," yelled Eben. "Does yer wanter smoder a fellah clean cut? Reckon yo' ain't got no sense 'tall."

In another moment Fiddy would have fallen plump on Eben's head.

As it was, when she suddenly jumped back at Dick's warning cry, she sent a lot of loose earth and stones tumbling down on Ebenezer.

"Hi dar, yo' jess g'way f'om dat yer hole," yelled Eben. "Does yer wanter smoder a fellah clean out? Reckon yo' ain't got no sense 'tall."

"Hab yo' got any yo'se'f?" asked Mrs. Crow.

"Co'se I hab. I'se got all dey is in de Crow fambly."

"Bery well den," remarked Assafidity, with considerable asperity; "less see yo' get out ob dat hole, ef yo' got so much sense all by yo'se'f."

Then away went Fiddy, and Ebenezer was still in the hole.

"Good-bye, Sneezer, I'll see you in the morning," chirped Dick.

"Goo'-bye, you ole stuff," said Curry, who couldn't keep still no longer. "Why don' you get out of de hole ef you am so smaht?"

Dick went only a short distance off, but he shut up his lantern and everything was dark all around.

Then Eben was sorry he had spoken so sharply.

"Hi, dere, you Dicky," he called out. "Come back yer ah' show me de light, dat's a good fellah."

digging his toes and elbows in the earth and trying to squirm up and out of the hole, "I'd jess gib him one lickin' dat he'd membah for so long as he lib, de mis'able critter."

What with a good deal of grunting and puffing and sweating and climbing, Ebenezer at last managed to get up high enough to reach the edge of the hole with his hands.

Then he drew himself up till his head was just above ground.

Dick had been watching that coon and he now suddenly dashed out, flashed his lantern in Eben's face, and gave a yell.

Ebenezer gave another in reply, let go his hold, and dropped back to where he had been.

He also carried a lot of dust and stones and loose earth with him, and once more he got to sneezing.

"Hallo, Sneezer, haven't you got out of that yet?" asked that innocent Dick. "I thought you were in bed long ago."

"Don' yo' talk ter me, yo' bad boy," retorted Ebenezer. "I don' wan' nuffin ter do wif yer."

"Oh, very well, then," said the young scamp. "I was going to bring you a ladder, but if you don't want to have anything to do—"

yer. Ain' yo' an' me ole frens? Of co'se we is. Yo' go fotch de laddah, dat am a good fellah."

"Oh, you want a ladder, do you?" said Dick.

"I thought you said you could get out alone."

"Neber say nuffin' ob de so't!" protested Eben.

"Oh, didn't you?"

"Co'se not! How yo' spect a fat fellah like me get out ob a little hole like o' dis all by him lones? Co'se he can't."

"Well, what did you want to fall in it for, then?"

That was a pretty question to ask!

However, Eben did not dare to give Dick any sauce while the ladder question was still pending.

"Well, I'll see what I can do," said Dick. "Just you wait here three or four hours and I'll come and help you out."

That was a kind offer and no mistake. Wait three or four hours for a ladder!

Ebenezer thought not.

He heard Dick's retreating footsteps, and he yelled for the boy to come back.

Dick did not heed that pleading voice. He had gone after a ladder.

Honest Injun, he had, as you shall see. However, Ebenezer thought he was only fool-

ing.

"Hol' on—come back yer!" he shouted. Dick did not do so, or, at least, not immediately. He took Curry with him and went away to fetch a ladder.

After yelling till he was hoarse, and hearing no answer, Ebenezer concluded to help himself instead of depending on Dick.

Once more he dug in his toes and his elbows, and began working his way toward the top.

Once more, also, he got his hands on the brink and drew himself up.

Again did he get his head above ground and see safety just within his grasp.

Then along came that scamp of a Dick Plunket with his ally, Curry.

Between them they bore a ladder.

There!

What did I tell you?

However, the ladder did not do Ebenezer Crow such a lot of good.

Just as he fetched his head above ground the ladder fetched him in the neck.

"Here's the ladder, Sneezer!" yelled Dick as he rushed up.

Ebenezer got it, sure enough.

The end took him just under the chin and down he dropped.

He made a wild clutch at the air and caught nothing else.

Then Dick and Curry let the ladder drop right across the hole in the ground.

"There you are, Sneezer!" called out Dick.

"Here's your ladder."

Eben looked up and saw the rounds of the ladder outlined against the sky overhead.

"Huh, why didn' yo' tell me yo' was comin' wif it?" he muttered.

"Why didn't you wait?" asked Dick, by way of reply.

Then he skipped away, and this time he did not return.

Ebenezer looked, saw the ladder just above him, and once more began to ascend.

He had worn steps in the side of the hole, and could get up better than before.

It did not take him long to reach the top, but there was now another difficulty.

The ladder was in the way.

He could get his head between two of the rounds, but not much else.

It has been said that a man can get through any hole through which he can put his head.

The fellow that said so did not know the size of Mr. Crow's stomach.

Eben could get his head and shoulders between the rounds easily enough, but there he stuck.

"Confoun' dat pesky fellah!" he remarked, in anything but dulcet tones. "Why de dooce couldn' he drop de ladder down de hole, 'stead ob frowin' it ober de top?"

There was no one there to answer this leading question.

Then, what with his squirming and twisting and trying to get through the ladder, down went one end thereof.

To tell you the truth one end just rested on the edge and very little more.

Consequently, down went ladder, Mr. Crow and the whole business.

Eben had his head and shoulders between two of the rounds, you must remember.

He got a terrible yanking, for up went one end when the other went down.

"Wow! wondah whedder mah haid am taken off," he muttered when he struck the ground at the bottom.

There he was, however, pinned between the ladder and the wall with his head stuck fast.

He managed to get that free, however, and then he thought of escape.

Here was a ladder, all handy, and of course he could use it.

He shifted it over to one side as far as possible and began to ascend.

That ladder was not a very long one, reaching above the hole only about four feet.

Up went Ebenezer till he got to the top, but then he must climb higher.

He wanted to step off the ladder instead of helping himself.

Well, when he reached the last or next to the last round, the ladder lost its balance.

There was too much weight at the top and it tipped over.

The earth at the edge of the hole gave way with the pressure on it, the bottom of the ladder flew up and Ebenezer went flying through the air like a shot from a gun.

He struck on his head in a pile of earth ten feet distant and came down like a spread eagle.

When he got up, the air was very warm with the language he used.

"Juss wait till I cotch dat boy Dicky," he remarked to himself.

That meant a good deal, considering all that had happened.

However, Dick was nowhere to be seen, and a light in the kitchen doorway was the only visible sign of life about the place.

With a grunt and a sigh Eben went indoors and made things fast.

"Wondah I eber b'lebe anyfing dat boy tell me, arter he done fool me so many times," he muttered.

When he went to bed, Fiddy got after him and gave him fits for having so much virgin soil on his garments.

"Whar yo' flink I get de time ter wash yo' close, Eb'nezer, ef yo' get so dutty all de time?" she demanded, hotly.

"Wall, let de Irish gal do it den," returned Eben.

"She do nuffin' but loaf all de time."

Joanna would have had something to say about that had she been present.

She was not, however, and the Crows went to roost, though it was long after their usual hour.

In the morning Ebenezer had another surprise party.

When he went out he found neither a ladder nor a hole in the ground.

Moreover, he could not see where a hole had been.

Dick and Curry had hustled and filled up that hole and covered it over before Eben came out.

"Dat am bery funny," remarked the obese coon.

Just then along came Dick, asking, in melodious tones, where Ebenezer had procured his head covering.

"Good-morning, Sneezer," said Dick, taking a reef in his tune.

"Don' yo' spoke ter me," growled Eben. "Yo' am no good."

"What's the matter now?" asked the guileless Richard.

"Yo' know bery well what, yo' bad fellah," sputtered Eben.

"No, cross my shoe laces, wish I may never see the back of my neck, I don't."

"Wha' fo' yo' frow me down dat hole fo' las' night, yo' sassy fellah?"

"What hole?"

Oh, he was awful innocent, he was.

"De hole dat yo' frow me in las' night, ob co'se," sputtered Ebenezer.

"When did you say that was?" asked Dick, as placid as a duck pond.

"Las' night, I tol' youse," returned Eben, beginning to get his African up.

"What time last night?"

"Donno. 'Bout leben o'clock, I reckon."

"What was it you say I did?"

"Yo' done tol' me fust off dat suffin' was gwine ter happen."

"And did it?" asked that quiet youth.

The question added to Ebenezer's rage.

"Did suffin' happen?" he repeated. "Wull, I jiss say it did, yo' nassy feller."

"What was it, Sneezer? Tell me all about it."

"Yo' know what it was bery well, yo' bad feller. Yo' frow me in a hole, dat's wha' yo' do."

"Where is the hole?" asked Dick.

Sure enough, where was it?

"Jess right about yer, dere whar it was," answered Eben, gazing all around.

"That won't do," said Dick, as cool as ice at a dollar a hundred.

"Wha' dat won' do?"

"That hole story."

"Wha' yo' mean?"

"Pretty big hole to take you in, eh?"

"Suttinly."

"Well, where's the hole?"

Ebenezer knew where it ought to be, but it wasn't there.

He looked around, he scratched his head, he gazed toward the kitchen door, and then he muttered:

"Reckon some fellah come 'long in de mo'nin' an' tote dat hole away. I take my oaf it was dere las' night."

Dick broke into a laugh.

There was no resisting the temptation, in fact.

"I say, Sneezer?" he said, after that.

"Wull, yo' say it den."

"Do you know what I think?"

"'Specs yo' flink a heap ob t'ings, mos'ly how ter get up jokes, I reckon."

"Do you know what I think of you?"

"Dat I am a bery good fellah."

"No, sir."

"Wha' den?"

"That you had a load on when you came home last night."

"Me, Dicky?" asked that incredulous coon.

"Yes."

"Wha' fo' yo' t'ink dat?"

"You went to see your friends and you came home loaded, fell over the door step, and thought you had tumbled down a hole."

"Dat jess what I did do."

"Yes, I thought so."

"No, I don' mean wha' yo' mean. I mean dat—I mean—"

"Oh, yes, I know," interrupted Dick. "You're mean enough to go out in the sun and never take an umbrella, so that your shadow will get sun-struck."

"I tol' yo' I did fall down a hole wha' yo' brung me ter an' den yo' upstot a laddah on me."

"I did?"

"Yas'r."

"When?"

"Las' night."

"Where was this?"

Ebenezer was boiling.

"Right yer, I tol' yo', drat yo' skin," he muttered, making a jump for Dick.

The young fellow dodged, and Ebenezer fell on his nose.

"Haven't got over it yet, have you?" laughed Dick.

"Jess wait till I cotch yo', drat yo' hide," said Ebenezer. "I show yo' whedder I'se sober or no."

"That story won't do, Sneezer. Where's the hole, and where's the ladder?"

Ebenezer didn't know, and Dick went off whistling.

"I declar' fo' it, ef it don' beat all!" muttered Mr. Crow. "I 'membah all 'bout dat bizness, an' den when I come out to look fo' de hole an' de laddah, dey am done gone."

It was puzzling, indeed, and Ebenezer would finally have come to believe that the whole thing was a fancy, if it had not been for Curry.

That young gentleman was one of the kind who never know when to keep their mouths shut.

After Dick had gone, out he comes, sees Ebenezer, and begins to laugh.

"Yah-yah, look at de big stuff!" he guffawed.

"How yo' get out ob de hole?"

"Wha' hole am dat?" asked Eben, smelling a mice at last.

"De one yo' done fall in las' night," said Curry.

"Yah-yah, dat am de bes' ting yet."

"Neber fall in no hole 'tall," muttered Ebenezer, adopting Dick's tactics.

"Yas, yo' did, I tol' youse," persisted Curry.

"Reckon I 'orter know."

"Wull, yo' did."

"I tol' yo' I didn't do it."

"Yas, yo' did, yo' ole stuff," insisted Curry, "an' yo' can't get out ob it, kase me an' Mass Dick dig de hole in de ole well an' cober it ober wif sticks, an' den we call yo' out las' night an' say 'shool' an' yo' drop right in. Yah-yah, yo' kean't get out ob dat."

Then that small coon, thinking he had done something very funny, began to laugh uproariously.

Ebenezer had thought he was right all along, and now he knew it.

Dick had temporarily bluffed him, but now he was all right.

"Don' yo' lemme cotch yo' tellin' any mo' lies like o' dat," he now said.

"Like what?" asked Curry.

"Like dat one 'bout de hole."

"Dat ain't no lie!"

"Yas, it am."

"Tol' yo' it ain't."

"Bery well, den, whar am de hole?"

This trick was Ebenezer's.

Curry fell into the trap set for him.

"Whar am de hole?" he repeated.

"Yas'r, whar-am de hole?"

"Wall, me an' Mars Dick fill it up, so dat yo' be boddered ter fln' it, an' tink yo' dream all dat. Yah, yah, dat am too funny, dat am."

Then the young imp just shook with laughter, and rolled over on the grass.

That part of it was funny enough.

It was more serious when Ebenezer grabbed hold of him.

Taken off his guard, the little imp allowed himself to be made captive by Mr. Crow.

Then came the tragedy.

That lump of ebony was rushed off to the woodshed, and there ensued an interview between a trunk strap, a fat young coon, and—

However, let us draw a veil over the painful scene.

CHAPTER XV.

MASTER CURRYCOMB was saddest when he sat down for several days after that little interview, wherein he, a trunk strap and Ebenezer were the chief characters.

He blamed Dick for it, instead of himself, however, and he would not notice our hero for as long as the soreness in the rear lasted.

Dick could get along without him well enough, however, and the young fellow proceeded to enjoy himself.

One day the professor came home with a great scheme in his head.

It was something that would make his fortune

in a few weeks or perhaps less, if taken up at once.

From the absent-minded way in which he went about the place, Dick judged that the worthy man had something on hand, and determined to find out what it was.

Finally he missed the professor, and, going up to the laboratory, found the great genius hard at work.

"Good-morning," said Dick. "You appear to be busy, sir."

"H'm, ha, yes, quite right. I am busy, always busy," muttered the professor. "I have not explained to you my great invention, the masterpiece

"And what about the Californians? You will soon bury them out of sight with the dust from the east."

"Not at all, my dear boy, not at all. They will have a dozen of my largest vibrators, and will send all the dust into the ocean a thousand miles from land."

"You'll be making new islands in the ocean in a few years, if you do that, uncle," laughed Dick.

The professor took the thing seriously, however, and replied:

"Well, that will be a blessing, and then, besides, I shall be able to sell my invention to the people of those new islands."

Going to the window Dick called out to the young load of charcoal.

"Hi, Curry, come up here where it's cool."

"H'm! reckon I'se bettah off down yer, whar I is," muttered Curry.

"No, you're not. Come up here."

"A'right, ef yo' say so, Mass Dick."

As soon as Dick saw the little coon start, he skipped behind the professor's wind machine and bided his time.

In came Curry, presently, and looked around for Dick, who was not to be seen.

The little coon espied the machine, saw that it was something new and went over to look at it.



"Whoa, I tol' yer!" howled Eben, in great fear, for this sort of speed was not to his liking. The mule was having his own way this trip and wasn't going to stop. He just laid himself out and left all his friends behind.

of my life, I think. It is a wonderful invention, Dick, my boy, and I expect to make a fortune out of it."

"What is it?" asked Dick, seeing nothing so very surprising.

"A machine to prevent the accumulation of dust in large cities," said the professor, with gusto, and adding, with pardonable pride, "the greatest work of my life."

"How does it work?" asked Dick.

"This, as you will see," explained the professor, "is merely a small model, but its force is tremendous. These fans you see, when set in motion, revolve at a speed of two thousand revolutions a second."

"Well?" said Dick, inquiringly.

"One of these machines, set up in a central place in any large town, will drive out every particle of dust which might accumulate and keep the place as clean as wax."

"Yes, but I fancy the people in the next place would make a kick at getting all the dust from the other place."

"Ah, that is where the money will come in, my dear boy. They will then buy a machine of their own and send the dust on to the next place and they will do the same and so on, so that I shall place one of my patent revolving ventilating dust expellers in every town from here to California."

"Yes, and have a wind blowing clean around the world all the time."

"Yes, and what a benefit to navigation that will be," exclaimed the professor enthusiastically. "There will be no more calm belts, and vessels will be able to make their voyages without delay."

"Yes, if they happen to be going in the right direction," laughed Dick, "but how about head winds?"

"Ah, in that case they will use one of my patent wind elevators, which will send all the air currents up in the heavens, and they can then keep on their way in safety."

"Quite a wind raising scheme, in more ways than one," chuckled Dick, as he went out, "but I don't think it will work."

In the afternoon when the professor was out, Dick went into the laboratory and set the model in motion.

Loose paper went flying about as the fans began to revolve, and there was a lively breeze in two shakes.

Just then Dick heard Curry singing in the barnyard just below.

It was a hot day and that little coon kept in the shade, besides wearing a big straw hat and the loosest kind of clothes, and not very many of them either.

Then Dick turned the crank for all he was worth and set the fans to going at their highest speed.

Away went Curry's hat clean across the room, while his loose garments fluttered like a ship's sail in a gale of wind.

"My wo'd! what a win' dey is up yer!" he gasped, catching his breath.

He couldn't see Dick, and the wind was getting stronger all the time.

Finally, as he approached nearer, one of the fans took him a clip under the chin, as it came up, and sent him heels over head.

When he picked himself up, he made one dash for the door and went down stairs in three jumps, muttering to himself:

"My golly! some folks mought like dat sort ob win', but I'se gwine ter steah cleah ob um m'se'f."

Dick couldn't get him to go near the place after that, and the coldness on Curry's part, toward Dick, increased to the freezing point.

A joke on Ebenezer was due at about this time, and Dick began to set his wits to work to see what it should be.

As it happened, however, Ebenezer got caught with a snap in which Master Dick had no hand.

It being thundering hot weather at this season, the darkies in town must needs go to work to exert themselves all the more.

For instance, they arrang'd for a lot of games,

athletic sports and other et ceteras, to take place in the broiling sun, on a hot afternoon in August.

You can never seem to make it hot enough for nigs, however, and the entire colored population looked forward to the occasion with the greatest anticipation.

The affair was to be held on the grounds usually occupied by the agricultural shows, when one was held in town.

There was a race track, there were booths for all sorts of things, and there would be no end of fun.

Among the leading attractions was a scrub race between a dozen or twenty coons, each mounted on somebody else's mule, the prize being given to the animal which arrived last.

Every nig would try to beat his own mule, of course, and the slower and older the beast was the better for him.

Ebenezer took his oldest and stubbornest mule along and entered him for the race, feeling sure that none of those other coons could ride him, and that he would be in last at the post.

Sam Slickjaw, a tall, slab-sided coon who lived four or five miles distant, and for whom Ebenezer had no love, came to the show leading a mule which looked like any other mule, his ears being like wings, his feet like packing cases, and his temper none of the best.

Well, when it came time to draw lots for the mules, Ebenezer got this one.

Sam Slickjaw got a mule that was blind in one eye and had only three good legs, while Eben's mule went to Jim Brown, a feather-weight coon from another part of town.

"H'm! reckon I fotch dish yer mule in fust ob all," muttered Eben. "Dey ain't no out ob town coons gwine ter beat dis ge'man, you see."

The mules were drawn up in a line ready for the start, and the riders got on board.

"S'pect dat big niggah t'ink he am gwine ter make dat muel ob mine go like de debbil," remarked Sam Slickjaw to himself, "but dat animile know what he am 'bout, all de time."

"Dat lilly nig am shuah to fotch dat mule ob mine in las' to de pos', yo' see," thought Eben, "an' if I don' took de nonsense out ob dat country niggah, I wouldn' say so, no sah."

"Am' yo' all ready?" asked the starter, when all had mounted.

"Yas'r!" cried all the coons.

They were all in a hurry to start, and if one had gone away ahead of time, he would not have minded.

You see each coon was anxious to beat his own mule, so that the latter might walk away with the purse.

You never saw such a rocky looking lot of mules in all your days.

You may have seen one or two as bad, but not so many crazy steeds together.

There were blind mules, lame mules, vicious mules, and pitching mules, and there wasn't one in the drove that didn't have some vice or another.

Everybody being ready the start was made.

Just one moment, please, before I tell you about the race.

Young Currycomb was on hand to see the start.

He had been here, there, and all over, during the afternoon, but Ebenezer had paid no particular attention to him.

When Curry saw that Ebenezer was going to ride, he determined to have some fun.

He didn't know Sam Slickjaw nor Sam's mule, but he was in for fun all the same.

Just before the word was given, Curry slipped up behind Ebenezer with a switch in his hand.

When the signal was given he let that mule have it across the flank, hot and strong.

He did not care really whether Ebenezer got the mule in first or last, but he did want to see that mule jump.

His wish was gratified, although he barely escaped being sent flying over the fence when the mule let out with his hind heels.

Whew!

What a rush there was, to be sure!

The coons used whip and spur and voice to urge on their steeds.

Some of them needed fires built under them to make them go faster than a mile an hour, but they were not all that sort.

Some of them were built for speed if they really chose to exert themselves.

The animal ridden by Ebenezer was one of that sort.

He could go if he wanted to, but he did not always want to.

This was one of the times when he was showing his speed, however.

As soon as he felt that cut across his rear he bolted.

He was not going to stand any such nonsense as that, he wasn't.

Away he went, stretching out his clumsy legs and pounding the ground with his big feet.

You would have thought that a whole regiment of cavalry was coming by the noise he made.

In two shakes he was in advance of the whole cavalcade.

Sam Slickjaw was mad, for he saw that he was likely to lose the race if that thing continued.

As for Ebenezer, he had never traveled so fast in his life.

He wanted Sam's mule to get in ahead, but he did not care to have his breath taken away like that.

"Whoa dar, yo' or'nary beas'!" he yelled, digging his heels in the animal's sides.

Away went his hat, like a big kite, while his coat tails stood out straight behind him.

"Whoa, I tol' yer!" he bawled.

The mule had no time to pay attention to any such foolish commands.

He was making the best time he knew simply because his master wanted him to be beaten, and also because Ebenezer desired him to stop.

"Whoa, I tol' yer!" howled Eben, in great fear, for this sort of speed was not to his liking.

The mule was having his own way this trip and wasn't going to stop.

He just laid himself out and left all his friends behind.

Sam Slickjaw was mad enough to kill that mule of his.

He was sure that the brute would beat everything and that was not what he wanted.

His mule hoofed it for all he knew, and presently was half way around.

Some of those mules had not gone more than fifty feet in the same time.

Sam's mule did not stop there, however, by a good bit.

No, sir, he just banged ahead and completed the circuit.

The other steeds had not gone a quarter of the distance, any of them.

You would have supposed that that obstinate mule would have stopped when he had gone over the course, but he did not.

Instead of doing so, he kept straight on as if trying to see how many turns he could make.

Ebenezer did not fancy this sort thing worth mentioning.

He had fondly imagined that the mule would stop when he had gone around.

"Whoa dar!" he yelled, but it made no difference to the mule.

If he made any change in his speed, it was to go faster than before.

Poor Ebenezer had to hang on with tooth and nail to keep from being fired off bodily.

He had no wish to dismount in that way, particularly when the mule belonged to Sam Slickjaw.

Being unable to get off in any other manner, he therefore did his best to keep his hold.

One or two solid bumps that he had received by being tossed in the air and then dropped back into the saddle, had made him cautious.

He hugged that mule around the neck as though he meant to throttle him.

Even that did not make any difference to that obstinate beast.

He continued in his mad career, and completed the second full tour of the track.

"Whoa dar, dat am 'nuff!" muttered Eben, too hoarse to speak aloud.

The mule kept right on, and seemed likely to make the round three or four times to the other animal's one.

"Confoun' dat niggah," growled Sam Slickjaw. "He am doin' dat just a puppus, I know he am."

The spectators were very much amused by the actions of Sam's mule, and they paid more attention to him and Ebenezer than they did to the other racers.

"Dat's right, Eb'nezer, make de mool go's many times roun' as yo' kin."

"Spect dat country niggah tink him mule am gwine ter win dish yer race, but he amn't, ef Eb'nezer Crow know what he am 'bout."

"Dat's right, Mistah Crow, jess yo' took de nonsense out'n dat animile."

There were some, however, who were disposed to make game of Eben.

"Look a' dat big niggah, how he jump! Spect he am tryin' ter cut down him fat."

"Ain't dat a fine t'ing fo' a 'spectable man ter do, snortin' roun' like o' dat?"

"Reckon he don' care a cent's wuff 'bout dat poo' muel. He orter be 'shamed ob heself, he orter."

Well, sir, that mule went three times around the track before the others had gone half around.

Maybe Sam Slickjaw wasn't mad up to the boiling point.

Not only would his mule not get the prize his owner had expected him to take, but he would be clean blown to pieces besides.

"Spect dat mule be no good fo' nuffin' now,"

muttered Sam, as Ebenezer dashed past him for the third time.

"Whoa, yo' injun!" gasped Eben, nearly strangling the poor brute.

"Yas'r, dat am de way," muttered Sam, giving the mule he rode a dig in the ribs; "fust aboose de po' mule an' den call um bad names. Nice way to treat a po' dumb beas', dat am. Get up, dere, yo' nachel debbil," and Sam gave the plug another lively crack.

It makes all the difference in the world whose mule you are riding, you see.

Sam did not like to see his mule abused, but he could whack another man's animal all he chose.

Well, the race was going on all this time, and the mules were on the home-stretch.

After going around the track three times Sam's mule seemed to think he had done enough in that line.

Then he stopped and gave Mr. Crow a much needed rest?

No, sir, not at all.

There was no rest yet for Ebenezer.

That cranky mule merely changed his tactics, that's all.

First he tried to chuck Ebenezer clear up to the ceiling of heaven.

Eben would not be chucked, for he held on like a leech. He got several bumps, to be sure, but he stuck to the mule's neck like a poor relation to a millionaire.

If he had stood still long enough, Mr. Crow would have jumped off, but he wouldn't.

No, indeed; that mule wanted to throw Eben off, and not allow him to dismount in his own way.

After trying that sort of game three or four times and causing Eben to grunt and groan and sweat, Mr. Mule went off on another tack.

That is to say, he left the course altogether and started across country with the big coon on his back.

Talk about the rocky road to Dublin! Why, that wasn't a patch on this one.

It was full of ups and downs, briars and bushes, big stones and little, and everything else most.

Eben got a taste of all there was, and if there had been more he would have had some of that.

Goodness only knew where that mule meant to fetch up, for Ebenezer did not.

"Confoun' yo', whar am yo' gwine, anyhow?" muttered the poor man as the mule went full tilt down a hill at the bottom of which there was a rail fence and something else.

Ebenezer was presently to find out where he was going, and not in the pleasantest way, either.

He was now out of the race, but there was plenty of excitement left in it for the others.

Sam Slickjaw, Jim Brown and Pete Crullers were leading and were doing their best to get in first.

Mr. Sam, thinking only of getting ahead, now that his own mule was out of it, was whacking the mule he rode with all his might, and yelling like mad.

Suddenly, however, he discovered that Jim Brown, whom he was passing, was mounted on Ebenezer's mule.

He had taken a good look at the brute before the race and he now recognized him.

If he passed that mule it meant giving Ebenezer a chance to win the race.

All but these three animals had passed the post and the race now lay between them.

Whichever got in last would win the purse.

Would Sam Slickjaw allow Eben's mule to win it?

Not much, you may be sure, if he could prevent it.

And yet he had already passed Jim Brown and Pete Crullers was about to do the same.

Sam's plan now was to get in last, even if he won the race for another coon, rather than let Ebenezer's plug get the prize.

He suddenly reined in his beast and shouted to him to stop.

The mule had other plans in view just then.

Pete Crullers may have assisted them, though I can't exactly say.

At any rate, Pete's mule took a nip out of the flank of the one Sam rode and Pete gave him a crack besides.

Pete's mule dashed ahead of Sam and Sam's gave a snort and a kick and fairly bolted.

The result was that Sam did not even come in next to the last.

He dashed past the winning post and then was tossed out of the saddle and stood upon his head.

Jim Brown did not care to let Eben's mule win any more than Sam did.

He therefore lashed the poor brute most unmercifully, but all to no purpose.

That mule suddenly stood still and no amount of banging could make him budge.

All the other mules passed him before he would consent to move.

Even then he would go only at a walk, and a slow walk at that.

When Sam Slickjaw got on his feet from having stood upon his head, he saw that which gave him a worse pain in the neck than his late position.

Pete Crullers had crossed the line soon after he had done so himself, and there was Ebenezer Crow's mule quietly walking along, a good twenty paces from the finishing post.

If anything could have increased Sam's wrath it was that.

"Dat amn't faiah," he sputtered. "Dat lilly sawed-off niggah an' dat ole stuff Eb'nezer Crow am layin' in togedder ter win de race fo' Eb'nezer. How much yo' get fo' dat, yo' ha'f pint ob eidah?"

Jim Brown wasn't going to be called a half pint

Down the hill he raced toward the fence and the road beyond and the ditch just before you came to the fence.

That was the something else I told you about, that ditch was.

Down the hill went the mule, with Eben clinging to his neck.

At the bottom he suddenly stopped short.

He had gone quite far enough, and wanted to get rid of his passenger.

Ebenezer did not stop, or, at least, not just then.

He went flying over that mule's head, did the giant swing act in mid-air, and tumbled head first into the ditch.

Ebenezer was mad before, but now he was furious.

"Don' yo' stan' dere laffin' at me like o' dat, yo' obst'nate critter," he remonstrated.

"He-haw, HE-HAW, HE-HAW!"

Instead of stopping his song, the mule made it louder and more emphatic.

Ebenezer could not get at the brute, and so he had to content himself with abusing poor Jack.

"Don' yo' talk ter me like dat, yo' or'nary beas'. Yo' orter be biled down to' glue, dat's wha' yo' orter, drat yo' ole skin!"

"If I owned a muel like yo' I kill um de fus"



Ebenezer was mad before, but now he was furious. "Don' yo' stan' dere laffin' at me like o' dat, yo' obst'nate critter," he remonstrated. "He-haw, he-haw, he-haw!" Instead of stopping his song, the mule made it louder and more emphatic.

of eider by any out-of-town coon of Sam Slickjaw's build, and he hauled up and began to make some remarks.

"Don' yo' dar' ter sinnywate dat I would be s'pected ob brib'ry an' corruptium," he expostulated. "I done done try ter get dish yer mule in fust fo' all I was wuff, an' ef yo' say I didn', I jess—"

Nobody knows what he would have done under those circumstances.

Eben's mule, with an obstinacy peculiar to his tribe, decided to do just the opposite to what his rider desired.

When Jim Brown wanted him to stop, therefore, he dashed ahead.

The feather weight nig clung on, and Eben's mule passed under the string last, and so won the race.

That ought to have been some consolation to Ebenezer, but it was not, for he did not know about it at that time.

He was also having considerable fun of the wrong kind with Sam Slickjaw's mule just then, but I haven't room to tell you about it now, so you'll have to wait.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE mule and Ebenezer were having lots of fun, but the mule had the most of it.

It was lucky for him that there was plenty of water in that ditch.

As it was, he caused it to overflow its banks to a considerable extent.

The lucky part of it was, however, that the water saved him from sticking in the mud up to his ankles, the wrong end first.

The poor coon floundered about for a bit and then came to the top, with his head just sticking above the water.

Then he shook the water out of his eyes, gave a sneeze and a gasp and gazed about.

There stood that diabolical mule on the bank, gazing at him with one ear up and the other down, and looking as solemn as an owl.

He seemed to be in no hurry now, but stood there gazing at Ebenezer with all the coolness of a stoic, and looking as though he could keep up that sort of thing all day.

"Confoun' yer!" sputtered Eben. "Wha' fo' yo' wan' ter do dat?"

"He-haw, he-haw, he-haw!"

That's what the mule said.

He said it quite plainly too, and with a crescendo movement quite charming to hear.

He began low, went up gradually, and increased the volume of his tone till he came to a regular roar.

ting I do, yas'r, 'kase yo' amn't a bit ob use to yo'-se'f or anybody else.

"Ain' yo' shamed ob yo'-se'f, yo' pesky ole fo'-leg debbil, ter stan' dere an' beller like dat to a 'spectable colored ge'man wha' neber done yo' no bahn in him life? It amn't right, I tol yer.

"Yo' orter be proud ter carry a ge'man like o' me on yo' ole back, wifout frowin' me in de ditch an' den stan' dere like yo' am doin' an' gib me sass, yo' mis'able critter."

"He-haw-he-haw-he-haw!"

The more Ebenezer talked the more the mule brayed.

He may have been simply recovering his breath, but he made awful work of it if that were the case.

Ebenezer could not stand it, and he began to scramble out upon the bank.

The mule evidently thought that he would be obliged to carry that coon again, for he lifted up his voice in lamentation.

Then he suddenly turned around, let fly with his hind hoofs, elevated his tail and bounced off.

If Ebenezer had been ten feet high his brains would have been dashed out when the mule let off those sky-rocket gymnastics.

As it was, he was sufficiently frightened to jump back a couple of feet.

That sent him into the ditch again, and there was a second inundation.

The mule did not stop to see what happened after that, however, but made tracks with more dispatch than neatness.

Then Ebenezer pulled himself out of the ditch and stood on the bank to drain.

He was wringing wet and covered from head to foot with dirty water, mud, slime, green scum and black ooze.

He was not a pretty object to look at, and certainly not a nice one to smell, with all that ditch water on him.

He was in no sweeter temper either, you would better believe.

At that time he did not know that his mule had won the prize, but if he had known it, he would not have felt any the less angry.

"Ain' dat a nice way fo' a ge'man ter go home?" he muttered, as the black mud slowly ran down his legs, and the water formed in puddles at his feet.

"I jess bet that Sam Slickjaw put dat muel ob his up ter dat trick, jess kase he didn't get de cup, confoun' 'um!"

"He am gotter heah f'om Eb'nezer yit, I tol' yer, an' ef he t'ink dis am de end ob dish yer bizness, he am mistooked."

"F' I'd knowed dat was him muel at de staht, I wouldn't ha' lowed 'um ter run, no sah, an' I wouldn't ha' rid him, nor let no one else rid him nudder!"

"Wha' bizness a out o' town niggah like o' dat got ter come to our doin's anyhow, dat's wha' I'd like ter know. He don' b'long yer, an' ef he wan's ter do any funny bizness, jess let 'um stay ter tum."

"Yas'r, me an' dat skinny niggah hab got ter say suffin' mo' bout dish yer bizness, an' I reckon I knows what I'se gwine ter say, honey."

"I don' ca'y no razzah, sah, but I'se got two ob de bigges' flataes in de county, an' I ain' no slouch fo' weight, I tol' yer, an' if I jess fall on dat sheet ob papah niggah once, he shibber to pieces like glass, he do."

Having allowed considerable water to run down his garments, Ebenezer now divested himself of his coat and proceeded to wring a lot more out of it, doing the same with his vest, but stopping there.

He did not want to go back to the grounds, but his wife and mule were there and he had to look after them.

"Spect dem funny niggahs laffat me if I tu'n up lookin' like dis," he muttered, as he put on his coat and vest again and walked on.

Then an idea seemed to strike him and he went on more briskly.

"Jess let dem say anyfing to me," he muttered, "an' I bang dat Sam Slickjaw fellah in de snoot quick as nuffin', an' do de same to de res' ob dem if dey gimme too much guff."

However, when he reached the grounds Sam and his mule had departed.

The other coons had made it rather torrid for him, and the temperature of Rome in August was fridgidity itself to the warmth of Sam's treatment.

Consequently he had shaken the dust of the place from his cowhides and had skipped out, mule and all.

When Eben came walking in, still dripping, the coons were all glad to see him, and made no facetious remarks anent his appearance.

"Dat mule ob yours done win de puss, Eb'nezer," said Jim Brown, "an' I do my bes' ter foteh um in fust."

"Dat Sam Slickjaw he try fo' ter sen' yo' mule in fust, too," said Pete Crullers, "but he don' aak squar' like Jim Brown, an' he don' got stood on he head fo' dat."

"Reckon I done stan' him on him on him haid agin an' knock some ob de nonsense out of him," muttered Eben. "Whar am de or'nary no 'count niggah jess now?"

"Gon' hum, dat's whar he am," said one dandy coon, who was known to carry a ten inch razor, "an' if he hadn' gone just the time he did, I reckon somebody would ha' had ter call a ambulance or suffin' like dat."

"H'm, dat so?" muttered Eben. "Reckon yo' mought ha' kep' him a li'l while ter let me done settle wif um."

"Huh! dey wouldn't ha' been anyfing lef' fo' yo' ter settle wif, if he'd ha' stayed free, fo' minnits," laughed the dandy moke.

"Neber yo' min' dat, Eb'nezer," said Jim Brown.

"Yo' mule done win de puss, I tol' yer."

Mr. Crow had heard this before, but he now for the first time took a sense of it.

"H'm! yo' do' tol' me!" he gurgled. "Wull, wull, dat muel ob mine am a pearl critter, an' don' yo' fo'git it."

"Yas'r, he am," said Jim Brown, "an' I done mah lebel bess ter make him beat."

"Yo' am a smaht young feller, Jim Brown," said Eben, greatly mollified, "an' do' I don' wan' ter flatten yo', I mus' say dat it anybody coul' bu'

kep' dat mule f'om winnin' de puss, you'd ha' done it."

"Reckon I'se a putty heart fellah when it comes to ridin' a mule," replied the light weight nig.

"Yas'r, so yo' am, but dat muel beat yo' in obst'nacy, an' I donno ef you am sorry fo' dat, kase a muel am one ting an' a sene'ble man am anoder."

That settled things all right for Jim Brown, and he was mightily well pleased that he had won the prize for Ebenezer.

"Yo' bettah come up to mah ho'se fo' suppah, Jeems," said Eben, "an' den I drive yo' hum arter dat in de ebenin'."

Jim Brown accepted with alacrity, although Mrs. Crow felt like offering some objections.

Young Curry certainly had an objection, for, little as Jim Brown was, he necessarily crowded the fat little moke, as Ebenezer took up the whole of the front seat himself and the others all had to squeeze into the hind one.

However, the thing was settled, and as the festivities were over the coons began to start for home.

Eben hitched that prize mule of his to the cart, Fiddy, Jim Brown and Curry piled in at the back and Eben took his place in front.

The water had not yet finished running off his clothes and no one would have cared to sit next to him, in consequence.

"G'long wif yousel!" cried Ebenezer, cracking his whip about the mule's ears.

Ebenezer had said that his mule was an obstinate brute, and it was not long before the animal proved himself to be such.

He had gone just a quarter of a mile when he began to show the unevenness of his temper.

First, he wanted to walk along the level and run like sin up hill.

Then, when Ebenezer remonstrated and hauled him in, he snorted, tried to knock spots out of the dashboard and wanted to go in the ditch instead of in the middle of the road.

When he got to the top of the hill, you would have thought that he would want to take a breathing spell for a few seconds at least.

He did not want to do anything of the sort.

Instead, he just bolted off at the same speed which Governor Kent is said to have made when going for election.

He seemed to have designs on the party in the wagon, as though desiring to spill them all out.

Eben was a trifle too heavy to be served that way, but Jim Brown was bounced about like a bit of pop corn on a red hot shovel.

"Stop dribin' so fas', yo' Eb'nezer Crow," said Mrs. Crow, explosively, as she clutched at the seat in front.

"Hol' on, Eb'nezer, hol' on, I kean't stan' dish yer so't ob t'ing," muttered Jim Brown.

"Whoa dar, mule!" yelled Eben, sawing at the reins.

That mule was not going to stop until he was good and ready.

He just raced down that hill, and it was a wonder the wagon was not smashed to everlasting ruin.

Over stones, ruts and thank-ye-ma'ms it went, bumping and jolting till all hands thought they would be shaken to bits.

Young Currycomb rolled into the bottom of the wagon, Jim Brown was tossed into Fiddy's lap, the lady had her best bonnet banged against Ebenezer's shoulders, and there was the very deuce to pay.

Ebenezer received more bumps than phrenology knows about, though they were not all on his head by a large majority, and he began to feel that the day had not been as roseate an affair as he had anticipated.

"Whoa, yo' Injun, stop o' dat, kean't yer?" he bawled, hauling in on the lines.

Then that mule concluded to stop, not gradually, mind, but all at once, when he reached the bottom of the hill.

The result was that Curry rolled clean to the dashboard, Mrs. Eben sat on the floor, and Ebenezer was bounced till he thought he would never be able to sit down.

Jim Brown held on, and that cranky mule turned his head, saw him, and gave a snort.

"Reckon dat critter knowed I was yer all de time," muttered the underweight coon, "an' he done done him bes' ter shook me off, but I kin tol' him I ain't ter be shaken."

Then that mule walked slowly on for a few yards and stopped.

He seemed to have made up his mind to stay there all night too.

"G'up dere!" shouted Eben, whacking away at the beast's quarter-deck with his whip.

The animal only shook his ears and never budged.

Eben wore his whip down to a stump, but that made no odds.

That mule just would not go, and that was all there was about it.

It was growing late, and Eben was anxious to

get home, but that did not seem to make any difference to the mule.

"Wall, yo' kin come 'long when yo' like," muttered Assafidity, "but I'se gwine ter walk. I ain' got no time ter fool away on a ole mule like dat."

Then the lady started to get out.

That was the time the mule concluded to go on.

"Whoa!" bawled Ebenezer.

Fiddy sat on Jim Brown's lap this time.

The mule would not stop now.

He did presently, however, but as soon as Mrs. Eben tried to get out, off he started.

"Reckon yo' bettah stop whar yo' is, missus," giggled Jim Brown, when Fiddy had been deposited in his lap for the third time.

Ebenezer looked around, frowned, gave the mule a belt, and said:

"Git on dere, yo' critter! Yo fink I'se gwine tu stop yer all night?"

Away went the mule, Curry rolled out at the tail end of the wagon, having remained on the floor for some time, Ebenezer was pitched forward and Fiddy sat on the floor.

That mule was bound to go now at all events.

He took the worst parts of the road, too, and gave the party a fine shaking up.

His main object seemed to be to get rid of little Jim Brown.

The feather weight coon held on, but presently the mule came to a wooden bridge over a small brook.

Over that bridge he went booming, bumpetty bump, raising a dust, shaking the rickety old structure and threatening to throw the wagon overboard at any moment.

Finally, in going over a loose plank, the wagon gave a bounce and out flew Jim Brown, landing on all fours in the river.

Mr. Mule did not stop for him nor for young Curry, but dashed ahead for a good half mile before halting.

Jim Brown did not stop to supper with the Crows that night.

Curry got a ride home with some one else, but Jim Brown was mad, and went off to his own residence, not at all on good terms with Ebenezer.

"I won de puss fo' dat niggah an' he didn' gib me a dollah of it," he remarked. "Wha' de dooce I car' fo' eatin' tea to him ho'se anyhow? Reckon I get bettah grub to hum."

It was a case of sour grapes, of course, but, after all, Jim Brown was just as well off as he was.

Assafidity did not like him and had never favored the idea of his going home to tea with them, and if he had gone it is not likely that she would have made it any too pleasant for him.

Ebenezer did not feel the same toward him now as at first, either.

"Glad we got rid ob de little nuisance," he remarked when he reached home. "We ain' had a bit ob trubble wif dish yer muel sence dat Jim Brown feller got chucked out."

"De imp'dent fellah!" sputtered Fiddy. "He done sot on my lap free times."

"Reckon he 'buse dat mule some war or noder," said Eben. "De critter wouldn't ha' 'haved so pesky pesterin' ef he hadn' had some gredge agin dat feller."

"Neber did like dem lilly small men nobow," remarked Fiddy, as a sort of clincher. "Dey neber am no 'count."

"Reckon he done 'buse dat muel when he been ridin' ob him," repeated Eben. "Dat critter 'membah all dem tings an' dat's de reason he done done him bes' ter shook off dat lilly nig."

"Good job, he done it when he did," said Fiddy, "else we all done got our necks broke. Wondah whar dat po' chile Currycomb am got to? Reckon yo' bettah tu'n back an' flin' him, Eb'nezer."

Curry turned up shortly, however, and he was as much down on Jim Brown as the Crows were.

Consequently, you can see that Jim Brown's room, small as it was, was considered of more value than his company just then.

Curry, being a trifle out with Dick at that time, did not relate to our hero the incidents of that afternoon.

Dick found them out, just the same, however, and had a good laugh all by himself.

"I'd like to have been there," he remarked, "but I think I can have just as much fun with Sneezer some other time, if I work my points right."

So he could, but he let Ebenezer alone for a time, having other subjects to work upon.

One of these was Bertie Smith, the dude admirer of Dick's sister, Rose.

One warm morning, as Dick was sitting on the lawn in the shade, he saw Bertie come along in his dog cart with a big bundle on the hind seat.

"Hallo, Bertie, old chappie, what have you got there?" asked Dick.

"My bawth awticles, don't yer know," answered the dude.

"Bath awticles?" repeated Dick.

"Yas, deah boy, Tawkish towels, don't yer

CHAPTER XVII.

know, and sponges and toilet soap, haiah bwush, and other necessary things."

"Where are you going for your bath?"

"To the wivah. It's very delightful theah, much better than those horrid little tubs at the hotel, don't yer know."

"I believe you, old chappie, but what do you want of such a load of things? A pair of tights and a towel is enough."

Dick was standing alongside the cart by this time, and he distinctly saw the dude blush.

"Oh, weally, that would nevah do," said Bertie.

"What more do you want?"

"I want my bawth wappah, and my slippahs,

were the dude's clothes, and on the table were brushes, combs, tooth-brushes, hand glasses, scent bottles, powder puffs, and no end of other folderols.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" said Dick. "All this trouble for a swim in the river."

Bertie's horse and trap stood not far away in the shade, and Dick got an idea in his head.

He watched his chances when Bertie was out of sight behind a bend in the stream, and swiped all the toilet articles, bath wrapper included.

These he carried to the dog cart and deposited under the front seat.

Poor Bertie Smith.

He had prepared for an elaborate toilet after his bath in the river, and now that bad boy, Dick Plunket, had taken away all his fixings with the exception of one towel.

How could he make his toilet with simply that and nothing more?

It was simply impossible, to a man of his luxurious habits.

"Gweat hevvens! how did I come to fawget ewything like that?" he gasped.

Then he began to think.



"I coteh 'um dis time," muttered Ebenezer with a tone of determination. Then he fairly tore around that barn, making the gravel fly as he hustled along. That did not do him any good either. He did not see or hear the least sign of Dick.

and my dwessing case, and my umbwellah, and my canopy to dwess undah, don't yer know, and

"Anything else?" laughed Dick.

"Yas, I think I shall: that is if I haven't forgotten my hand glawss, so that I can see if me haiah is pawted stwaight behind, don't yer know."

Dick turned toward the house with a sigh, and Bertie drove on.

"If everybody had to take all that trouble when they went to take a dip," muttered the young joker, "I don't think the river would be troubled very much."

Half an hour afterwards our young gentleman took a short cut to the river to see how Bertie was getting on.

That dude had actually rigged up a small canvas tent, more than high enough to stand upright in, and had set out all his toilet articles on a portable stand.

He was in the water just now, dressed in a tight-fitting Jersey suit of black and red, with felt slippers on his feet and a skull cap on his head.

Dick took a peep in at the tent, getting behind it so that Bertie could not see him.

On a camp chair was thrown a long dressing gown and a couple of Turkish towels, on another

All that he left was one towel and the dude's clothes.

It would have been sheer robbery to have taken those.

"Now we'll see how he gets along," remarked Dick as he skipped away.

He did not go very far, because he wanted to see the fun, but he took care to pick out a position among the trees where he could see and not be seen.

Well, after having had his swim, Bertie came ashore, walked up to his tent, entered, and looked about him.

First he sat down, then he stripped off his gorgeous suit, and then he reached for his perfumed soap and sponges.

Great heavens, they were gone!

So were his thick towels, his gloves, his flesh brush and his bay rum.

Great Scott, what a loss!

The poor dude turned pale at the thought.

Only one towel, and not a brush, comb, powder-puff or hand glass.

How could he make his toilet under such circumstances?

Clearly it was impossible.

The thought was enough to turn his brain.

He could really think, if he were put to it, although he did not often indulge in such fatiguing work.

The result of his cogitations was the following: He had brought everything with him as he remembered, after a long course of head work.

He knew perfectly well that he had brought sponges, towels, powder puffs, brushes and combs, eau de cologne, and everything else that his giddy tastes called for.

Where were they now, then? That was the question.

"Some howid twamp must have come in and taken ewything," he sighed.

Then the terrible nature of the situation loomed up before him in all its awful aspects, and he just sat down and wept.

Young Dick Plunket was piping him off from a shady nook, and the scamp heard the sound of the weeps very plain.

He was so heartless, however, that he would actually have laughed, only that then he would have given himself away.

He smothered his mirth, therefore, and awaited developments.

"And I cawn't even telephone faw some maw, up to the hotel," sighed Bertie.

Well, no, not very well.

"How the deuce am I going to dress myself with only one towel and no brushes, naw glawss, naw powdah?"

He had his clothes, but they were not sufficient.

"I wondah if I cawn't wait here till somebody pawsses, and awsk them to go to the hotel faw some maw things. I'll just put on me bawth-wappah and wait."

Yes, but there wasn't any bath-wrapper for him to put on.

Moreover, he was getting cold, sitting there all wet with nothing over him.

Ker-chew!

He nearly sneezed his head off that time, and that showed him the position of affairs.

There was clearly nothing for it except to use his single towel and get dressed as soon as possible.

This he proceeded to do, shedding copious tears the while as he thought of his sad plight.

Dick stood it for a time, but then he, too, gave way to his feelings, and burst out in a fit of laughter that nearly split him in two.

He had to hustle in order to avoid discovery, for Bertie heard him laughing, and came out to see what it meant.

"I weally believe some one is lawfing at me, don't ye know," he muttered. "Oh, deah, this is weally dweadful! Suppose it should be that howid twamp who stole my dweessing-cases, baw Jove!"

He did not seem to tumble to the fact that Dick might have been the culprit.

The tramp idea had entered his head and, so long as that was there, no other notion had any room.

You can't expect a dude to think of two things at a time, you know.

Such a thing was never heard of.

Dick had been obliged to hustle, and so he lost the rest of the fun.

There was not very much more of it, however.

Poor Bertie was so frightened that he hurried through his dressing, packed up his tent, jumped into his cart and drove off in as short a time as possible.

Not until he reached home did he discover the things under the seat.

In fact he did not discover them at all, but one of the stable boys did.

"Well, I'll be jiggahed!" remarked the dude, when the discovery was pointed out. "It's not vewy high-toned to be jiggahed, I know, but I weally will be jiggahed, bah Jove, nevahtheless."

How the things came to be under the seat was something he could not understand, and the more he tried to explain it the more puzzled he was.

He had to give it up at last, but it got all over town just the same, and Mr. Bertie Smith took his baths in the hotel after that.

In the course of time young Curry got over his cross fit toward Dick, and was quite ready to help that lively young gentleman in playing tricks upon Ebenezer or anybody else who happened to come along.

Dick did not care if the little nig were mad at him or the reverse, for he could always get along without any assistance from any one.

However, it was fun to him to have the fat little coon with him, and he therefore made no fuss when Curry began to hang around him again.

Ebenezer kept his eyes open, and when he saw the two boys together again, he muttered:

"Dat young relation ob Mis' Crow's bettah look out fo' himse'f ef he don' wan' anoder good lickin' one ob dese days. Dat boy Dick, he jess spile dat lilly niggah, an' de lawd knows he war bad 'nuff when he come yer."

"Yo' don' coteh me 'doptin' any mo' chillen wha' I ain' got no call fo' tu 'dopt, an' I don' car' ef dey am my wife's 'lations. De line am gotter be drawed somewhars."

"Jess look at dat li'l imp an' see how much he eat in de fuss place. Lor' bress me, he am 'nuff ter make crops scurse, he am, an' den he am all de time up to denilments ob some kin' or noder."

"Jess let him git to goin' wid Dick, an' he won' be no good fo' nuffin' 'tall, I tol' yer, an' de on'y way yo' do any good wif um, is tu use a ba'l stave or a trunk stamp or suffin' persuadin' like o' dat."

"Dere am dat big niggah loasin' roun' purtendin' he am wo'kin' so awful hahd," young Curry would say to Dick. "Wouldn' I jess like ter put a ho'nets' nes' inside o' dem big breecherloons ob his'n an' see him hustle fo' a few minnits. Yah, yah, yo' bet I jess would."

"Well, it's easily enough done," said Dick; "there are plenty of hornets' nests around the farm. Why don't you go and get one and work up a good snap?"

Curry was not quite so green as to take any such advice as that.

"H'm! yo' mus' t'ink I don' know nuffin' 'tall!" he remarked.

"Oh, no, but you shouldn't talk of doing things

that you can't carry through. Now, I'll show you a good snap to play on Ebenezer."

"What am dat, Mass Dick?" asked Curry, all excitement.

"You wait and see," said Dick, quietly, and that was all the satisfaction the little fat nig could get.

As it happened, he was not ready to work a racket on Ebenezer just then, but he liked to fool Curry, and so he did.

Just about now along came Johnny Gilfeather, Joanna's beau, and Dick got in a good snap on him.

Johnny called to see Joanna, and wore his best Patrick's day beaver and a green necktie, to do honor to the occasion.

Dick saw him coming, and was ready for him with a dandy snap.

Johnny went in, left his hat on a table in the hall, and interviewed Joanna in the kitchen.

As soon as they got to spooning, Dick got in his little racket.

It was an old one, but it worked to a charm.

He put on Johnny's dicer, walked into the room, and said:

"I say, Johnny, how do you like my new top hat?"

Johnny never tumbled to the snap.

He thought that Dick had been investing in a hat of his own.

He thought that he could get off a good joke on the young fellow, but never tumbled to the possible reaction upon himself.

"Oho! luck at the bye puttin' an airs," he chuckled. "Faix, I'll take him down a bit."

Then he went for that high hat.

First of all he knocked it off.

Then he danced a jig on it.

Then he kicked it up to the ceiling.

When it came down he batted it across the room.

"That's right," said Dick, quite unconcerned; "amuse yourself, Johnny, my boy."

Johnny did amuse himself.

He grabbed that hat and tore it into ribbons.

"Put an a hoigh hat before ye're twinty-wan, will yez?" he chuckled. "See phwat you get far thot, me bye."

"That's right; go on, amuse yourself," remarked Dick, "and if you want a hat to go home with, perhaps Ebenezer will find you one."

Then Dick took a walk and Johnny took a tumble.

Joanna had already taken one and she howled out:

"Faix, ye big fule, it's yer own hat ye've been smashing."

This was the time that Johnny took his full-sized tumble.

If he could have got hold of Dick just then the young fellow would have been paralyzed.

Dick was not taking any chances on that sort of racket.

That's why he skipped out.

"Well, I'm blowed!" remarked Johnny, only he did not use those exact words, "av the young vil-yan hasn't played me for a sucker, afther all."

Then he wanted to dance on somebody's collar-button and grind them into hash.

He could not perform these gymnastic feats on Joanna, and there wasn't anybody else convenient.

"Begorry, there goes two dollars for a hat," he muttered, pulling off his coat, "an' I'm blessed av I don't git aven an somewan!"

Just then in came Ebenezer.

It only happened that he came in, for there was no design in the matter.

Mr. Gilfeather heard his footsteps and, in his excitement, thought Dick was returning.

He made a break for that young fellow, as he supposed and bashed him in the mug.

It was Ebenezer's mug that got the crack.

In another moment Johnny thought that an earthquake had struck him.

It was only Eben's big fist taking him under the chin.

That coon resented all such familiarities with indignation.

When he launched out with that big bunch of bones of his, Johnny Gilfeather took a back seat.

That it to say, he took a seat on his back, and slid several feet along the floor.

When he sat up and looked around, he saw Ebenezer looking black at him.

"Wha' fo' yo' dar' hit me, yo' mis'able Irish-man?" demanded the choleric coon.

Johnny began to realize that he had made a mistake.

"Troth, it wor on'y a joke, Misther Crow," he explained.

"Am dat so?" asked Eben.

"Yis, that's all. Ho, ho, ho!"

Ebenezer looked doubtful.

Then he began to grin.

Next he smiled one of his most expansive smiles,

From that he began to give audible signs of his mirth.

He just howled and yelled and shook with laughter.

"He, he! Dat was on'y my joke, too," he gurgled. "Ho, ho! ha, ha! he! Wasn't that a funny joke? He, he! Dat am de very bes' ob all de season."

Somehow or other Johnny Gilfeather did not appreciate the joke the same as Ebenezer.

The coon fairly roared, but Mr. Gilfeather did not grin any more.

He was not sure if his jaw was not dislocated, and he did not want to laugh too hard.

The result was the sicklest kind of a smile.

"Faix, I don't see phwere the laugh comes in," he remarked.

"Faix, ye've med a fule av yerself, that's phwat ye have," said Joanna.

"He couldn' do dat," laughed Ebenezer, "kase he was one a'ready. Ho, ho, ho!"

Then Ebenezer did the laugh act some more, and did it to perfection.

"Ho, ho! Dat fool P'ishman flink hisself mighty smaht, but he ain' got no mo' sense dan a yaller dog. He, he!"

Mr. Gilfeather did not like this sort of business.

"Faix, yes think yez air mighty funny," he remarked, stiffly, "but I don't think it, begob."

He could not lick Ebenezer, and so he tried to throw cold water upon the latter's little joke.

"Maybe it ain't so funny to youse," laughed Eben, "but den some fellahs neber kin see a joke. He, he, ho!"

Then Ebenezer waddled away, chuckling and grinning, while Johnny Gilfeather wondered whether by any possibility his hat could be restored to anything like its original form.

If it had been only sat upon, that might have been possible, but, as it had been crushed and battered and separated, brim from crown, and torn up and down and across, it would require the services of a more than ordinary clever conjurer to put it in proper shape again.

"Begorry, it's worse than the split in the dimmy-eratic pairty," mused Mr. Gilfeather, "and there's no putting it together agin, for love or money, bad luck to the young vil-yan."

Then Joanna came in with a bit of consolation.

"Troth, yez orter knowed betther," she remarked. "Yez moight have known the bye wudn't wear an ould fifty cint hat like thot."

If Miss Joanna indulged in very much talk of that sort there was a big chance of the engagement being broken off short in no time.

Johnny evidently did not like it, for he replied with considerable asperity:

"It wor not a fifty cint hat and it wor brand new, Miss Gilhooly."

"Oho-ho, it wor new, wor it?" chuckled Joanna. "Yis, whin Noah built the ark, perhaps, but not since. Faix, yez have been makin' a scarecrow av yerself wid it for the lasht tree years."

"It's prevaricatin' ye air, Miss Gilhooly. I've not had it for that long and I niver med a scarecrow av meself wid it annyhow, me leddy."

Joanna did not like the tone of Mr. Gilfeather's remarks, nor yet the substance.

"Oho-ho—it's me leddy, I am neow, is it?" she sputtered, bridling up. "Sure, it's mighty high toned ye're getting, Misther Gilfeather, me lord," and Joanna tossed up her turn-up nose and laughed hysterically.

"Yis, and it's all a put up job bechune ye and the young vagabond to ruin me," retorted the mad Mick. "Sure, the young rascal ought to be sint away where he couldn't do anny more mischief."

"Young rascal, is it?" muttered Joanna. "Out av mischief, is it, ye falsifier? Sure, Masther Dick is a foine bye intoirely, and I'll not hear a worrud av shlandher agin um."

"Oho, maybe ye're makin' up to um, so's yez can get th'ould woman's money. It's a foine schemer, ye air."

"Sure, I moight do worse than marryin' the bye," laughed Joanna.

This was a reflection upon Mr. Gilfeather himself.

"Be marryin' me, yez mean, I persume?" he retorted.

"Faix, I niver thot av doin' annything so silly as that," giggled Joanna.

This was only bluff, for she had thought of doing that very thing.

"Faix, ye'll not get the chance," said Johnny. "I'd not have ye av there wor not anuther girrul to be found."

Then Joanna was mad in earnest.

There was a broom standing very conveniently by, and she grabbed it up in a jiffy.

The way she made it fly around Mr. Gilfeather's head was positively bewildering.

She did not hit him more than once in four tries, but that was quite often enough, particularly as she held the brushy end in her hand.

Mr. Gilfeather concluded that the temperature of

that kitchen was too warm for comfort, and he dusted out, much to the amusement of Dick, who witnessed his hasty departure.

It happened, a night or so after this, that Dick, strolling about the place, met Ebenezer with a puzzled look upon his fat face.

Dick had had his supper and felt like having a lark as well, and Eben's woe-begone look suggested to him that he might have some fun with the big coon.

"Hollo, Sneezer, what's up?" he asked.

"It am de stranges' t'ing in de worl' what become ob dat 'ere lilly imp," said Ebenezer. "One

"H'm! I like ter see yo' do dat t'ing befo' I took any stock in um."

The thing looked altogether too fishy for Mr. Crow to swallow, in fact.

"All right," said Dick. "You see the barn over there, do you?"

"Ob co'se. Yo' don' spect I'se gwine ter b'te've dat yo' make dat bahn disappeah, does yo'?"

"No, but you just follow me around that barn, keeping me in sight, and pretty soon you won't see me and you'll be looking right at me."

"Sho!" said Eben.

"Do you want to try it?" said Dick.

"Sutt'inly."

He could neither see nor feel Dick and he began to be puzzled.

"Dat am bery funny," he muttered, scratching his head.

"Ha, ha, you must be blind," said Dick.

The sound seemed to come from just around the corner.

Ebenezer dashed forward, but he found no Dick.

Then he suddenly turned and went the other way.

He went half way around the barn, but no Dick did he find.

"I coteh 'um dis time," he muttered, as he retraced his steps.



When Ebenezer beheld this he stood with open mouth and hands extended. "Hollo, Sneezer, how are you?" said Dick, carelessly. "Well, whar yo' been?" muttered Eben. "Sitting here on the piazza for the last ten minutes," remarked Dick, as cool as iced punch. "Well," said that disgusted coon. That was all he did say, but it meant much.

minute I seed um an' den when I turn my back I don' see um."

"No, of course not, unless you have eyes in the back of your head," laughed Dick.

"I don' mean dat, ob co'se, Dickey. Wha' I mean is dat dat lilly imp done disappeah jes as soon as I t'un roun', an' when I tu'n back agin he amn't dere."

"Oh, that's nothing, Sneezer," said Dick, wisely. "You want to see a man disappear right before your eyes and then you can talk."

"Sho! nobody couldn' do dat, Dickey," snorted Eben, incredulously.

"'h, yes, they could."

"Disappeah right afo' yo' eyes?"

"Certainly."

"You look at dem one minute an' de nex' dey am gone?"

"That's it."

"An' dey don' hide behin' nuffin, don' dey?"

"Of course not—they just disappear."

"Sho! yo'm tryin' fo' ter fool me, Dickey."

"Not a bit of it."

"Well, I don' bleve no nonsense like o' dat."

"Why, I can do it myself," said Dick.

"Yo' kin?" and Eben's eyes opened very wide.

"Yes."

"All right, then, it's a go."

Off started Dick toward the barn, Eben following close behind.

Dick put on a spurt and turned the corner, disappearing from sight.

Ebenezer hurried up and caught sight of the young fellow's coat-tails just vanishing around the corner.

He hustled again, and got a fine sight of Dick hurrying on.

At the next turn Eben did not see so much of Dick, and at the following one nothing.

"I coteh dat fellah dis time," muttered Mr. Crow with a chuckle.

This time he reversed his engines, so to speak, and took the back track.

He thought he would be sure to catch the young joker that time.

He did not.

Dick was not to be seen.

"Here I am, Sneezer!" called the boy, right behind him, as it were.

Eben turned and hurried in the other direction.

"Can't you see me?" called Dick. "Look out, or you'll step on me!"

Eben reached out his hands and took a step forward.

"Reckon I make too much ob a noise befo', but dis time he won' hear nuffin tall."

Then, with the cat like tread that we read about he stole around that barn, peering slyly around the corners in the hope of catching sight of that young scamp, Dick Plunket.

It was funny to see him, bent nearly double, advancing on tip-toe and peering around the corners expecting to see Dick.

He took care not to make any noise and he listened for any sound that might betray Dick to him.

Once around the barn he went and he had not seen a sign of the young scamp.

He had heard him once or twice but had not seen him.

Then he started around the other way exercising more caution than before.

It did not make the least bit of difference which way he went or how still he kept.

Dick eluded his grasp as well as his sight and now he could not even be heard.

"I coteh 'um dis time," muttered Ebenezer with a tone of determination.

Then he fairly tore around that barn, making the gravel fly as he hustled along.

That did not do him any good either.

He did not see or hear the least sign of Dick. After racing around that barn at railroad speed three or four times and seeing nothing of Dick, he suddenly paused and scratched his head. "Sakes alive! I believe it am jess as dat boy say," he muttered, "and he hab done make hisself inwisibl right afo' my bery eyes!" There was something uncanny in the thought, particularly as it was growing dark. "H'm! don' like de looks ob tings 'round yer," he muttered. Then he shook that neighborhood and started for the house. Well, where was Dick? Oh, he was all right.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. CROW grew tired of hunting for Dick, and started for the house.

Dick had told him some yarn about being able to appear and disappear at will, and Eben had been chasing him around the barn in order to disprove his statement.

The young fellow had finally disappeared for a fact, and poor Eben had raced around that barn three or four times without seeing him.

Then he began to think that maybe what Dick had said was true, and that there was some magic in the business.

He did not care to loaf around that barn any longer, if such were the case.

Towards the house he started, having no further use for a place where ghosts hung around loose like that.

When he reached the front of the house the first thing he saw was young Dick Plunket lounging in an easy chair on the piazza.

When Ebenezer beheld this he stood with open mouth and hands extended.

"Hallo, Sneezzer, how are you?" said Dick, carelessly.

"Well, whar yo' been?" muttered Eben.

"Sitting here on the piazza for the last ten minutes," remarked Dick, as cool as iced punch.

"Well!" said that disgusted coon.

That was all he did say, but it meant much.

He took a big tumble to the fact that he had been sold, and this was his way of expressing his disgust.

Then he turned on his heel, and walked around to his own quarters, while Dick laughed.

"Dat boy am de bery wustest in the hull business," he muttered as he turned the corner, "an' I'se just a big fool dat I trus' ter anyfing he say."

"De ideah ob him keepin' me runnin' roun' dat yer bahn, an' all de time him sittin' on dat po'ch takin' tings easy. Jest orter lambasted he in de jaw, dat's what I orter done."

"Reckon dat boy 'have hese' ef he done got one good lickin', but he am so slickery dot I neber kin got hol' ob um; but I cotch um some day, an' den let he look out fo' hisse'f."

As Eben had said the same thing a number of times before, and had never yet given Dick the thrashing, there was a pretty good chance that the young man would never get it.

Dick was willing to take his chances, at any rate, and the fear of a licking never deterred the young fellow from getting up any amount of rackets on this, that, and the other man.

It was not very long after this last snap on Ebenezer that Dick took it into his busy head to put up a brilliant job on the professor.

The great Dinglebus had a big idea on tap just then, and was full of it up to the muzzle.

It was an invention that was calculated to startle the world and fetch the shekels in by the barrel.

Somehow or other the shekels never managed to materialize, but the professor thought they would, all the same.

This thing was a grand double-back-action patent-vibrating, self-cocking, rotary motion, air-tight cylinder soda water making machine, which would do the work of a dozen machines in a quarter the time usually occupied by one.

The professor had a lot of generators, siphons and all sorts of things, and was having a grand experiment with his apparatus when Dick dropped in one afternoon to see him.

"Ah, busy, are you?" asked Dick.

"Yes, my boy, busy indeed. This is the work of my life."

"What is it for?" asked Dick.

"Making soda-water, my boy. Will do the work of twenty ordinary generators in half the time it takes one to do it now. This is only a model, you understand, but it will give you a good idea of how the thing works."

"Ah, yes, I see," said Dick, nosing around.

"One machine doing the work of twenty in half the time is equal to forty, you see, and as the expense of mine is only equal to half that of an ordinary one, we have a profit of three hundred per cent. to begin with, counting the cost of materials, time and labor."

"Very good" remarked Dick, "but what is this?" pointing to a faucet at the end of a big, fat reservoir or something like it.

"That's where we fill the cylinders, my boy. We fit a rubber tube on, connect it with one of the reservoirs, turn the crank and let in the gas. Don't touch it, my boy. It is very powerful."

"It isn't going now, is it?" asked Dick.

"Certainly, my boy—it is charged to the full extent. Don't you see the gauge?"

"Oh, I thought that was a clock," said that guileless Dick.

He knew better than that, but he wanted a bit of fun and was on the watch for it.

The professor began explaining things, and presently, when near the stop-cock, Dick said suddenly:

"What's that down there on the floor, uncle?"

The professor, being near-sighted and not having his glasses by him just then, had to stoop over to see what it was that Dick had pointed out.

That brought his rear extension on a level with the stop-cock of the big supply retort.

Dick gave the wheel a sudden turn and winked most expressively.

Whish!

Spat!

Whizz!

A stream of mingled gas and water, four inches across, suddenly shot out.

It struck the professor just below the base of the spine.

Talk about rapid transit, if you like!

The transit of Professor Dinglebus from one end of the room to the other was most rapid.

He was sent kiting, and went so fast that you couldn't tell which was head or legs or hands or anything else.

The way he rolled over and over beat the revolution of the earth all to smash.

He went so fast that he looked just like a ball and nothing else.

Well, there was an open door at the other end of the room.

It was quite lucky for the professor that there was.

If there had not been he would have gone smash through the wall.

Beyond the door there was a flight of steps.

Through the door went the professor, and then down those steps.

He may have touched once in going down, but certainly not more than that.

It was a quick way of getting down, and beat elevators all hollow.

Whether he landed on his head, his back or his heels, the professor never knew.

At all events, he finally got upon his feet, rubbed his head to see if it were all there or not and remarked:

"H'm, yes, ah, well, I declare, seems to me I came down in rather a hurry, yes, ah, upon my word!"

Meanwhile Dick had not been having such a rosy time of it as he expected.

It was all very well to start the stream going and send the professor kiting.

To shut it off when once it was started, however, was quite another matter.

Dick tried it on, when he had quite finished laughing at the professor.

Somehow he could not make it work.

He could shut it off a bit but not to the full extent.

The thing fizzled and sizzled and spurted at a great rate.

It gushed all over the shop and deluged Dick with soda water.

The generators were going at full force, and the professor had evidently miscalculated their power.

When they once had been given vent, there was no stopping them.

Dick tried it, as I have remarked.

He managed to shut the thing half off, but then there was a racket.

Whish!

Fizz!

Bang!

It was lucky for Dick that he jumped out of the way.

With a whizz and a puff, the head of the cylinder flew off and went skyrocketing through a window.

Dick was flooded with soda water, and felt fizzy enough to last for six months.

He did not turn quite so many flipflaps as Professor Dinglebus, but he did enough to satisfy him.

The machine was busted up at any rate, and Dick got out of that in short order.

He got down-stairs soon after the professor had pulled himself together, feeling as though things had not gone quite so well as he had expected.

There were not very many cold days in Dick's experience, however, and he could afford one now and then.

"Did anything break, my boy?" asked the professor, quite calmly, when Dick appeared.

Dick shook himself a bit, and then made answer:

"Something certainly busted, uncle. I think you must have miscalculated the force of the thing."

Oh, he was awfully innocent, he was.

The professor never tumbled to the true reason of the bust up, but, it is needless to add, he never completed his machine.

The affair was a lesson to Dick, by the way.

That young fellow never interfered with things he did not understand after that.

He was quite ready to plan rackets where he knew his ground, however.

The professor's studio was left alone, for fear of another explosion, but there was room enough elsewhere for all the jobs Dick wanted to put up.

Ebenezer was always a good subject, and our young gentleman presently found a chance to work off a jolly good snap upon the fat moke.

There had been a good many tramps about of late, for the summer was waning and the wanderers were striking for the cities, where they would spend the winter season.

Three or four of these nuisances came to the house every day on an average, and the thing was growing monotonous.

They usually came to the back door, entering a little garden through a gate and passing along a path bordered on either side by a light picket fence, on which trailing vines ran along.

The gate shut with a click, and that was always the signal by which those in the kitchen knew of the approach of tramps.

Dick concluded that it was about time to put a stop to the visits of these fellows, and he rigged up an arrangement which he thought would just about fix them.

"I've got something now that will fix the tramps Sneezzer," he said early one evening when he had finished his work.

"H'm! de bes' way ter fix um am ter bust dem in de snoot eve'y time dey come to the ho'se," said Ebenezer, with a snort.

"This thing will do it better than that, and you don't have to touch them," said Dick.

"Yo' don' hab ter tech dem?" sniffed Eben.

"No."

"H'm! dat am no good."

"Oh, yes, it is. You can fire a tramp out twenty feet away, and you don't touch or go near him."

Ebenezer was not swallowing any such stuff as that.

"G'way, boy," he muttered. "How yo' fiah him out if yo' don' tech him?"

"By this snap of mine. I'll show you how it works."

"H'm, don' beleve it," said Eben, not deigning to look at Dick.

"But I'll show you," said Dick. "You see these pipes running along the fence?"

"Sho! Yo' kean't do nuffin wif dem," sneered the moke.

Dick concluded to show the incredulous coon whether he could or not.

"All right, Sneezzer," he remarked. "You go out to the gate and pretend to be a tramp, and I'll sit on the door step and fire you out."

"Bet yo' don' do it."

"I'll bet you I will, and you won't get half way down the path."

"Bet yo' a dollah I go all de way."

"I'll go you. Go outside and try."

"H'm, yo' see how easy I get dat dollah," remarked Eben.

"All right. You can have it if you get it."

Eben then went outside, and Dick sat on the back stoop.

"All ready, Sneezzer?" he asked.

"Yes'r."

"All right then, come ahead."

Ebenezer opened the gate, gave it a slam and advanced along the path.

"Let her go," said Dick to some one in the kitchen.

The somebody was Fiddy, and she had been told how to run the tramp bouncer.

The moment she heard the latch of the gate click, she thought of tramps.

She rushed to the water pipes and turned on a strong stream.

Dick said to let her go, and Fiddy did let her go for a fact.

The water ran into those pipes on the fence which Dick had tried to show to Eben.

They were regular hose pipes, with one slight difference.

They were bored here and there, all along the line, with fine holes a half inch apart.

Well, Eben had taken half a dozen steps only, when he got a bath.

The water spurted on both sides of the path, taking him fore and aft and all over.

He got it in the mouth and eyes and ears, down his collar and in his neck, everywhere in fact. It came with jolly good force, too, and every jet was like a needle sticking in him.

"Wow!" yelled Ebenezer, making a break. The further he went the worse he got it. He saw Dick sitting on the stoop, doing nothing, apparently, and he could not make it out. He was bound to get to the stoop, and he made a grand dash for it.

Three or four steps was as far as he got. One section of pipe bursted and the water flew out worse than ever.

Eben got it in the eyes and was fairly blinded. He gave a gasp, turned tail and got away from that place in quick time.

The way he bolted out of that gate beat all the records for pastime you ever saw.

Then Dick called to Fiddy to turn the water off. This was not done immediately, for the wench was looking out of the window, taking in the show.

"My wo'd! how dat fellah do hustle!" she laughed.

In fact she did so much laughing that you couldn't get her to do anything else.

The best of it was that she did not recognize her husband, but thought he was some old tramp.

She got through laughing at last and then she turned the water off.

Eben went so fast out at that gate that he could not stop immediately, and he did not haul up until he had gone three or four hundred feet.

Then he slackened his speed, turned around, walked back to the gate and looked over.

There sat Dick on the stoop looking as cool as a watler melon.

"Hello, Sneezzer, how do you feel?" asked he.

Then Fiddy saw how wet Eben was and she took a big drop herself.

"Wall, fo' goodness' sake, if it wasn't Ebenezer wha' get the duckin', he-he!"

Then there was more laughter on the part of Mrs. Crow.

She giggled, she snickered and she guffawed, and it was fun to see her.

"Stop dat laffin', missis," said Eben. "Wha' so't ob ting was dat, anyhow, Dicky?"

"What do you mean," inquired Dick.

"Why, dat yer ting wha' yo' toned loose on me when I was comin' up de walk."

"That's my tramp bouncer."

"Yas, but how yo' wo'k um?"

"Oh, that's easy enough."

"Wull, what was um?"

"Oh, that's telling. You said it was no good, didn't you, old man?"

"Wull, I didn' spect yo' was gwine ter shoot a hull lot ob needles and pins inter me," muttered the coon.

"Yah-yah-yah! dat's all you knows," laughed

Mrs. Crow. "Don' yo' know what dat was? Ho, ho, yo'm a nice fellah, yo' is."

Then Fiddy did some more laughing and Eben opened the gate.

"Some folkses am so funny," he muttered, as he walked toward the house, "dat dey can't tell yo' nuffin', but I don' see what dey got ter laff at."

Just then Dick skipped into the house.

It took only a few seconds to turn on the water connected with that hose.

Spat!

Whish!

Biff!

Ebenezer got another shower bath and a good one too.

"Wow!" yelled Eben, making a dash for the house.

This time he got there all right.

He got a pretty good soaking, but he soon got out of the way of the shower.

Then Dick turned the water off again and skipped up-stairs, having no wish to be interviewed by that mad coon.

"Who done frow all dat watah ober me?" asked Eben, as he went on.

"Why, yo' big fool nigger, dat come out ob de hose pipe," laughed Fiddy.

Eben looked back, saw the water on the ground and muttered:

"H'm! dat's wha' he do wif dem pipes, ain't it?"

"Ob co'se. Yo' don' spect dem tramps am gwine ter stan' a dose ob col' watah, does yo'? Dey ain' useter dat so't ob ting."

"H'm! dat am de bes' ting yet," chuckled Mr. Crow. "Dat Dickey boy he do beat eve'yt'ing, but he bettah not come roun' dis yer place just now if he don' wan' ter get lambasted in de jaw."

Finally, however, Ebenezer got to laughing over the thing as heartily as Fiddy had and considered it a fine old joke.

"Jess wait till I see some ob dem tramps comin' to de ho'se to-morrer," he chuckled. "If I don' jess soak um, den I wouldn' say so."

However, Ebenezer did not get a chance at those tramps after all.

Dick was around the house when the first one showed up the next morning.

He saw the fellow coming and went in and sat on the back stoop.

The bum looked over the gate, saw Dick and remarked:

"Nice day, young feller?"

"Yes."

"Putty warm, though?"

"Yes, rather."

"Makes you tired walkin', don't it?"

"Shouldn't wonder."

"Hungry, too, hey?"

"Really?"

"Yas."

"You don't say!" said Dick.

"Say, young feller, give us something to eat an' drink, won't you?" asked the bum.

"Yes, I'll give you something if you come after it," said Dick.

The bummer needed no second invite.

He opened the gate, let it slam behind him, and walked up the path.

The click of the gate latch was the signal for Joanna to let on the water.

Dick had promised that tramp something if he would come after it.

He got it.

He never knew where it came from, but he got it and no mistake.

The dose that Ebenezer got was nothing to this one.

Joanna let hot water into those pipes instead of cold.

Water of any kind was bad enough to give a tramp, but hot water was a little bit too luxurious.

The skin was nearly taken off, and would have been quite so if it had not been protected by a certain amount of dirt.

That tramp did not want to call on Dick for an explanation.

He gave a howl, turned a somersault, slid on his ear along the path, banged out of the gate, and made tracks down the road as tight as he could jump.

There were no more tramps after that, and Ebenezer had no opportunity to soak them.

The first one must have told all the bums he met not to go near the house, for they certainly gave it a wide berth.

Ebenezer was thus done out of doing up those tramps.

Dick had had lots of fun out of his little invention, however, and he was therefore not so sorry that there was to be no more.

It was getting on toward cold weather now, and Mrs. Plunket concluded to return to the city for the winter.

Ebenezer and Fiddy would remain on the country place, however, to look after it, and have things all ready when the family came out the next summer.

The professor would go to town, of course, and no one would be left except the Crows.

Ebenezer was not sorry, but Curry was, for that fat coon could not have so much fun after Dick had gone.

Well, everything was soon arranged, and Rose, Dick, the professor and Mrs. Plunket all went up to town one bright day in October, and so, after Dick's departure, here end, for the present, THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF EBENEZER CROW.

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